

JOHN VANBRUGH'S *THE RELAPSE*:
A STUDY OF ITS MEANING

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INTRODUCTION

Restoration comedy has long been the neglected stepchild of English literature. Since the twenties, however, the interest in this field has shown a marked increase, and particularly during the last twenty years many respectable works dealing with that era in literary history have been published. The majority of these works, however, is concerned with the three luminaries of Restoration comedy: Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve.

Sir John Vanbrugh, whose first two plays appeared during the time when Congreve was writing plays, has often been overlooked or relegated to an inferior position. The little that has been written about him is seldom to the point. Yet his work seems to be deserving of being rated more highly, although admittedly he has not Congreve's brilliance or Wycherley's biting satire. The fact that a great deal of Vanbrugh's work consists of translation and adaptation poses a difficulty in making a choice: if one were to consider all of his work, the translations and adaptations ought to be included. But these are very uneven, not only in quality but also in closeness to the original. Omitting the translations and adaptations, one would be left with three original plays, one of which, however, was

left unfinished at the author's death and consequently offers great difficulties in interpretation because one can only guess how he would have concluded it.

Hence it seemed most feasible to confine this study to Vanbrugh's first comedy, The Relapse. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that Vanbrugh's achievement in The Relapse is such as to justify his inclusion among the outstanding writers of Restoration comedy.

This study is not specifically concerned with the morality of The Relapse. This issue has received too much attention ever since Collier's attack on the play and has often tended to blind critical judgment. The questions with which this study is primarily concerned deal with literary merit: whether the play deals with concerns that are deserving of attention; whether it presents some problems particularly important to its time; and whether its language and structure are expressing these concerns and problems.

All these questions, it appears, can be answered affirmatively. If, then, this study succeeds it may, it is hoped, enhance Vanbrugh's position among the writers of Restoration comedy. In a wider sense, it may also answer the charge against Restoration comedy in general "that [it is] trivial, gross, and dull."¹

¹L. C. Knights, "Restoration Comedy: The Reality and the Myth," Scrutiny, VI (1937), 143.

CHAPTER I

OCCASION AND CRITICISM OF THE RELAPSE

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While Sir John Vanbrugh is usually included among the major comic writers of the Restoration, his work has received scant critical attention.¹ Moreover, much of the criticism bestowed upon Vanbrugh is unfavorable:² too frequently his work is compared to Wycherley's or Congreve's and is pronounced inferior. It is idle to speculate whether the critical indifference toward Vanbrugh is caused by his introduction of some drastic changes into the setting of his comedies (he was the first major writer of the period to move part of the action into the country), or by his producing greater numbers of adaptations and translations than original plays. But whatever the reason for later critics' relative neglect of Vanbrugh's work, and notwithstanding Jeremy Collier's attack on The Relapse in particular, the author's contemporaries received his plays favorably.

The Relapse, Vanbrugh's first play, was first acted at Drury Lane in December, 1696, and "was received with mighty applause."³ The play was written as a sequel to Colley Cibber's Love's Last Shift, or The Fool in Fashion, which had met with great success. Frequently called the first sentimental comedy in English,⁴ Love's Last Shift,

depicting the reform of the rake-hell Loveless and his reunion with his faithful wife, Amanda, moved the audience to tears: "The joy of unexpected reconciliation spread such an uncommon rapture of pleasure in the audience that never were spectators more happy in easing their minds by . . . honest tears."⁵

In view of the close connection between Love's Last Shift and The Relapse, an acquaintance with Cibber's play--while not necessary to an appreciation of The Relapse--may be helpful in arriving at a fuller understanding of Vanbrugh's play. Such an acquaintance, by affording the possibility of comparing Cibber's and Vanbrugh's attitudes towards the moral conflict at the center of the Amanda-Loveless plot, may throw some light on Vanbrugh's view of human nature and the perfectibility of man as they are presented in The Relapse.

In plot and characters Love's Last Shift follows fairly closely the pattern of the comedies of the period. Yet there is one important deviation: the heroine is a married woman. This change in the marital status of Amanda opens for her possibilities that the heroines of former comedies did not have: she can follow her inclinations--accept Loveless' proposition--and yet retain her virtue--he is, after all, her husband even though he is not aware of her identity. Thus the moral conflict, at least as far as Amanda is concerned, is really non-existent, a fact

which considerably weakens Cibber's play and accounts, at least in part, for the unrealistic and optimistic view of human nature that it presents.

The plot of Love's Last Shift is, in short, this: Loveless, a confirmed rake who left his wife shortly after marriage to escape his creditors and the confinements of matrimony, returns to town penniless. He meets Young Worthy, an old friend who confirms Loveless' mistaken belief that the latter's wife died recently, but who plans to attempt to reunite the couple. Young Worthy himself is engaged in an intrigue to gain possession of the person and fortune of Narcissa, Sir William Wisewould's daughter, whom her father intends to marry Elder Worthy, Young Worthy's brother. The older brother, in turn, is in love with Hillaria, Sir William's ward and cousin to Narcissa. While the brothers Worthy plan to cheat Sir William, he plans to cheat his ward out of five thousand pounds.

Even though Young Worthy is kept busy in bringing his own and his brother's affair to a favorable conclusion, he exerts his efforts on behalf of Amanda, whom he likes and admires. He convinces her that Loveless' dislike is directed against her as a wife rather than as a person. If she could meet Loveless without having the despicable title of wife attached to her, Young Worthy believes that Loveless would be charmed by Amanda's beauty and possibly be led to repent his past behavior. Consequently Young Worthy arranges for Loveless to meet Amanda in the guise of a new mistress.

Young Worthy's plot succeeds, and Loveless, "confounded with his guilt and trembling to behold her," begs Amanda's forgiveness and promises eternal fidelity. This tearful scene of reconciliation is shortly followed by another, involving Sir William and Young Worthy. Informed of Young Worthy's deceit and his marriage to Narcissa, Sir William, after some show of temper, forgives the lovers and declines Young Worthy's offer to return Narcissa's portion. Good will towards all pervades the closing scene, and everybody is happy. This happiness, it is explicitly stated, is the reward of virtue. The play ends with Loveless' sententious remark that "the greatest Happiness we can hope on Earth, and sure the nearest to the Joys above, is the chaste Rapture of a virtuous Love."⁶

During all these complications and resolutions, the fool in fashion of the title, Sir Novelty Fashion, struts on and off the scene, serving as a target for the wits' barbed remarks, causing jealous outbursts by his attentions to Hillaria, but remaining himself completely unchanged and unmoved from his first appearance to his last line. Sir Novelty's complete lack of concern for others, his unwavering self-love and cynicism, offer a marked contrast to the high emotionalism of the other characters in the concluding scene. More than that, however, Sir Novelty's unabashed selfishness puts into relief the almost unbelievable unselfishness and generosity of Amanda, Loveless, Sir William, and

Young Worthy, leading the reader to the conclusion that neither of the two views of human nature presented at the conclusion of Love's Last Shift is realistic. Sir Novelty, of course, is a caricature and as such may be expected to be exaggerated. The other characters, however, particularly Loveless and Amanda, are apparently intended to be taken as serious representations of man. Consequently the reader is justified in demanding they be believable; but they fail to be so, not so much by their actions as by their unequivocal assertions concerning the rewards of virtue and the duration of their "happy state." Cibber's failure here to present a realistic view of human nature and human relationships constitutes the great weakness of his play, and led to Vanbrugh's attempt in The Relapse to show "the Frailty of Mankind, even in his most fix'd Determinations,"⁷ and the struggle involved in subordinating desire to virtue.

Cibber himself, unwittingly perhaps, points to this weakness in Love's Last Shift in the Epilogue to the play. Addressing the rakes in the audience, the speaker apologizes for the author's unforgivable sin of having allowed "an honest Rake /to/ forego the Joys of Life/His Whores and Wine t'embrace a dull chaste Wife," yet claims that the author's crime is mitigated by the fact that "he's lewd above four Acts, Gentlemen" (p. 92). The further explanation that the first four acts were designed for the rakes' "course Palate's," while the last act is to appeal to the ladies' "more refined

taste," only tends to emphasize the lack of a consistent point of view in the play.

Reformed or "penitent" rakes are commonplace in Restoration comedy.⁸ If one applied the term loosely, one might well include such characters as Etherege's Dorimant and Congreve's Bellmour, to name only two.⁹ Yet these rakes' progress to reform differs from that of Loveless in Love's Last Shift insofar as it is a gradual process of which the rakes themselves are well aware. When at last they admit defeat and accept marriage with all its implications, they choose what they consider the greater good--the woman their equal in wit, restraint, and understanding--over the lesser--unrestrained pursuit of illicit affairs. Norman Holland, in his discussion of the schism that exists in Restoration comedy between reason and faith, thought and feeling, or fact and value, points out that this schism is made evident by the fact that "the comedy deals with 'the Town' rationally and realistically for four acts; then the hero escapes into fideistic love in the fifth act, a love idealized, converted upward, in religious imagery."¹⁰ The validity of this statement as it concerns Restoration comedy in general may be questionable, but Holland's comment seems to describe adequately the sharp break in Cibber's Love's Last Shift.

While it is easier to find faults than merits in Cibber's play, one cannot in justice deny it all merit.

Notwithstanding Pope's shattering verdict in The Dunciad of 1743, Cibber is not completely lacking in accomplishment as a writer. In Love's Last Shift he touches on many of the problems that were of particular interest to the writers of his time. Foremost among these is the problem of freedom versus restraint as it affects the relationship between the sexes. This problem is closely connected with that of nature versus art, frequently presented in the plays through the opposition of the real self and the public manners of a character: the face and the mask.

The problem of freedom versus restraint in sexual relationships is demonstrated in Love's Last Shift by man's dilemma when faced with his inclination for change and variety and the limitations imposed upon these inclinations by marriage. Cibber rather skillfully and consistently uses two sets of images to express these two opposites: images pertaining to food and drink in connection with sexual freedom, and images of money and monetary transactions in connection with marriage. These two sets of images are employed almost exclusively by the characters who embrace the libertine point of view: Loveless, Young Worthy, Sir Novelty, Snap, and, to a lesser degree, Narcissa. These characters equate sexual relationships with "love" and refer to them in terms of food and drink. The exchange in the opening scene between Loveless and Snap implies their lack of money by

their need to "fast." "Fasting," in their usage, refers not only to the abstention from food, but also to the abstention from sexual relations.¹¹ Thus their past over-indulgence in food as well as sex has led to their present reduced circumstances which force them to abstain from both.

To refer to love in terms of food and drink reduces it to a purely physical, i.e., a "natural" need. Loveless justifies his leaving of his wife, a celebrated beauty, by claiming that "a wife is an eternal Apple-tree; after a pull or two, you are sure to set your Teeth on Edge" (p. 13). This statement supports his claim that "the greatest Pleasure we can take, is the Variety of Taste," but undercuts the libertine insistence on "following Nature" which frequently sets up 'brute beasts' as models:¹² the need for food and drink is natural to man, but the pursuit of variety is a refinement imposed by art and is not based on natural needs.

Even when food and drink do not refer to sexual relations they are much present in the talk of the libertine characters. Loveless, particularly, on several occasions needs to work himself up to a pitch of physical desire with the aid of wine and food. He agrees with Snap that they need dinner before looking for "a brace of whores," because "a Man is as unfit to follow Love with an empty stomach, as Business with an empty Head" (p. 18); moreover, he claims that wine helps love to gain its ends. At Amanda's house, Loveless is to be treated with two or three bumpers of strong

wine "to qualify him for her Design" (p. 60). At the sight of the supper that Amanda's woman brings him, Loveless again draws the parallel between food and sex: "If the meat be real, I shall believe the Lady to be Flesh and Blood" (p. 61). After a few glasses of wine he is ready to "present his humble Service" to her maid, if the "Lady doesn't make a little haste."

Having been relieved of this necessity by the maid's departure and Amanda's arrival, Loveless blames the confusion on his senses on the "Luscious Food before 'em." When Amanda rejects his plea to "let loose her early Kindness," he asks her "Why, Madam, would you not drink the first time you had a thirst," and advises her to give herself an inclination by "kissing the Cup" (p. 65). The whole scene is so filled with food and drink imagery that Loveless' few excursions into the language of romantic love cannot be taken for more than conventional figures of speech. One has every reason to doubt that he would pursue Amanda to the hazard of his life if she refused him, particularly since at the first sight of her he wished to "reap the Harvest of a ripe Desire, without the lingering Pains of growing Love" (p. 63). This wish, again, suggests the discrepancy between the libertine claim to naturalness and the libertine practices: in the order of nature, a time for growth normally precedes a harvest.

While Loveless, whose main aim is pleasure, is mostly concerned with the pursuit of illicit sexual relationships,

Young Worthy's avowed purpose is matrimony, "sweetened with a swinging portion." Viewing his proposed marriage to Narcissa as a purely commercial transaction, a means of repairing his finances and of avoiding the loading of his brother's "good nature too much," he refers to it consistently in terms of gold and money. On the other hand, Young Worthy refers to sexual relationships, in or outside of marriage, in terms of food. Only in his conversations with Narcissa does he resort to the conventional language of romantic love; and not once throughout the first four acts does he ever imply that his interest in Narcissa is anything but mercenary. After having implored his "dear Angel" to pronounce the joyful Word and draw the Scene of his eternal Happiness," Young Worthy comments unfavorably on Narcissa's affectation of coyness, but consoles himself with the thought that "there's no fault in her 1000 l. a Year, and that's the Loadstone that attracts my Heart" (p. 27). He scoffs at the "Wise and Grave" who believe that virtues are the best dowries, and claims that younger brothers hold to the maxim, "She's only Worth, that brings her Weight in Gold" (p. 28). Young Worthy's low opinion of virtue is expressed by his observation that virtue "is as much debased as our money; for Maidenheads are as scarce as milled Half-crowns" (p. 49). In spite of his skeptical view concerning virtue, however, Young Worthy implicitly acknowledges Narcissa as a virtuous woman. He understands that the virtuous ladies' holding out

for marriage--their refusal to "pay interest," as he calls it--may put them at a disadvantage opposite women of quality but easy virtue. But he implies his approval of the virtuous ladies' tactics when he observes that "the Principal, our Health, is a little securer with them" (p. 40.). The analogy between virtue and commercial transactions is plain; virtue is a selling point, nothing more. Further on in the same passage, Young Worthy and Narcissa discuss in terms of food and drink the stratagem of the "virtuous ladies" to arouse their lovers' desire without satisfying it outside of marriage. Young Worthy maintains that "starving" the lover too long may lead him to overindulgence and hence soon to complete lack of appetite.

Sir Novelty, in almost the same terms, promises the masked Flareit (whom he believes to be Narcissa) never to see Flareit again. He refers to Flareit as "homely Fare," while Narcissa's attentions to him are, in his words, "so rich a banquet." Basically, Sir Novelty's attitude toward women is very similar to that of Loveless and Young Worthy. But, being a fool, he fails to discern the difference between a Flareit and a Narcissa; and, being rich, he uses his fortune to buy physical pleasure, rather than his physical charms to obtain a fortune. The main interest of Sir Novelty, however, centers not on affairs but rather on the reputation for having affairs. His extravagant settlement to Flareit results not from his good nature but from his

desire for self-aggrandizement. Throughout the play, Sir Novelty fully justifies Elder Worthy's description of him as "one that Heaven intended for a Man; but the whole Business of whose Life is, to make the World believe that he is of another Species" (p. 19).

Sir Novelty's unfailing conceit and self-esteem, his complete lack of perception, are shortcomings in his character; yet these qualities make him one of the most consistent characters of the play and as such he is more satisfactory and believable than the reformed rakes, Loveless and Young Worthy.

Snap, Loveless' servant, is another such character. He shares his master's attitude toward sexual relationships and only regrets his master's past sins because of their cost. Shrewdly aware of the double standard of sexual behavior among his betters (p. 13), Snap does not need to resort to the trappings of romantic love with the women of his own class. His conversation with Amanda's woman is actually very similar to Loveless' exchange with Amanda (pp. 66-67), except that it is stripped to the bare essentials. Like Sir Novelty, Snap remains unchanged to the last. He is appalled at Loveless' insistence that he marry Amanda's woman: "Why Sir, how the Devil can you think a Man can have any Stomach to his Dinner, after he has had three or four Slices of the Spit" (p. 85), and only submits to Loveless' demand after learning that virtue is to be rewarded, tangibly and immediately. Snap's final words stand in sharp contrast to those

of Young Worthy and Loveless, and, as did his earlier remarks on marriage, serve to remind the reader of the sudden and unmotivated change of the latter two: "Well, Sir, I partly find that the genteel Scenes of our Lives are pretty well over; and I thank Heaven, that I have so much Grace left, that I can repent, when I have no more Opportunity of being wicked. . . . Ah, little did my Master and I think last Night that we were robbing our own Orchards" (p. 85).

Among the characters who do not accept the libertine view of sexual relationships, Sir Wisewould plays a slightly ambiguous role. He is no libertine, but his view of marriage is in many ways close to that of Young Worthy: he considers it a financial arrangement, into which the feelings of the parties concerned do not enter. His attempt to marry his daughter to the rich older brother, as well as his intended cheating of Hillaria, point this way. When it suits his purpose, however, he takes the romantic view: "true Love's beyond all Riches. 'Tis all Dirt--mere Dirt." (p. 72). In spite of his pride in his stoic temper, he loses it when the provocation is great enough, and five thousand pounds prove such. In his way he is as foolishly blind as Sir Novelty, and as unscrupulous as Young Worthy.

Elder Worthy is without a doubt the most "admirable" male character in the context of the play. He demonstrates his good nature by the "continual bounty" he bestows on his younger brother. If there are any doubts cast on his good

nature because he allows Hillaria to take revenge on Sir Novelty and involve Narcissa in the plot, or because he consents to the plan to cheat Sir Wisewould, such doubts are dispelled shortly. In the first instance, Elder Worthy's consent is motivated by his concern for Hillaria's reputation; and in the second, he agrees to the cheat only when he learns of Sir Wisewould's plot against Hillaria's fortune.

Elder Worthy never uses food and drink imagery in reference to love and marriage. He takes life and himself seriously, too seriously, as he demonstrates by his jealousy of Hillaria. Young Worthy, the rake, shows more perception when he instantly recognizes Hillaria's motive for seemingly encouraging Sir Novelty's advances: Young Worthy suspects his brother of having aroused Hillaria's anger by "preaching to her" about her conduct (as indeed Elder Worthy did). Elder Worthy again shows a certain lack of perception in his estimate of Sir Wisewould as "an honest man," and even more so in his claim, during his quarrel with Hillaria, to "have lost sight of her already; there hangs a Cloud of Follie between her and the Woman he once thought her" (p. 33). It never occurs to Elder Worthy that the folly that seems to separate him from Hillaria may be his jealousy rather than her mild flirtation with Sir Novelty. Yet Elder Worthy at last realizes his faults. He acknowledges Hillaria's superiority when he tells her, "I

blush to be outdone in generous Love" (p. 34); and he explains his obvious distaste for "the true Pleasures of the Park" by his reluctance to observe the weakness of others, because he has "more Faults of his own than he knows how to mend" (p. 52).

Hillaria, whose love for Elder Worthy attests to his excellence of character (in the context of the play), is a suitable counterpart for him. Her virtue is, like his, above reproach; yet she is less serious and more perceptive than Elder Worthy. She demonstrates a certain playfulness when she deliberately flirts with Sir Novelty in order to put Worthy in his place; and she shows perceptiveness concerning human nature, and the nature of women in particular, when she admits to Amanda that women, like men, are interested in the sexual aspects of love, even though "Modesty and good Breeding oblige them not to understand what, sometimes, they can't help thinking of" (p. 41).

Unlike Hillaria, Narcissa, the affected precieuse, denies this interest in her answer to Young Worthy's request that she marry him the following day: "Oh, Insolence! D'ye think I can be mov'd to love a man, to kiss and toy with him, and so forth?" (p. 17). That her innocence is pretense and her reluctance only show, becomes rather obvious in her later conversation with Young Worthy. At the same time Narcissa's preoccupation with herself renders her incapable of seeing through the pretenses of others. She is convinced

that Young Worthy loves only her and "would marry her without a Groat" (p. 12). This remark proves that Narcissa, in spite of her pretended worldliness, is unaware of the realities of her world: younger brothers cannot afford to marry ladies without a groat.

Amanda, on the other hand, shows more understanding of the world than one would expect of one who had spent close to ten years in semi-retirement. Her judgment of Elder and Young Worthy is sound, and her performance in the seduction scene is almost too convincing. Her attitude towards her absent errant husband is not readily reconcilable with her understanding of her world. In the beginning it seems that she is mainly interested in winning Loveless back for purely personal reasons. But as Young Worthy's design progresses, she becomes more and more concerned with the triumph of virtue, rather than with the satisfaction of personal desires. Her first doubts concerning Young Worthy's scheme are mostly based on her fear that she might fail to attract Loveless. Only in her discussion with Hillaria does she begin to express scruples concerning the moral justification of the plan: she would be an accessory to adultery if she "encouraged an unlawful passion"; Loveless' love for her, if she succeeded, would be vicious. When Hillary dispells her doubts, however, Amanda's efforts "to reclaim the Man she is bound by Heaven to love, to expose the Folly of a roving Mind, in pleasing him with what he seemed to loath" (p. 43), take

on an almost missionary zeal. No longer is her prime concern the satisfaction of her long-neglected love; she is now determined to see constancy rewarded, and in this way to "persuade the looser Part of Womankind ev'n to forsake themselves and fall in love with Virtue" (p. 43). Even though she speaks in the recognition scene with Loveless of her "despairing passion," her "presuming passion," and "the tenderest tale of love" which her eyes tell, and insists that she is the one to be forgiven for her deception, there is never any doubt as to who is forgiving whom: Loveless certainly is the repentant sinner, Amanda the forgiving saint.

When the sudden about-face of almost every character in the play occurs halfway through scene two of act five, the audience is completely caught by surprise. The change of character goes hand in hand with a change of imagery. Food and drink images disappear--except for Snap's closing remark--and religious images predominate from here on.

After having spent the night with Loveless--obviously to their mutual satisfaction--Amanda discourses on the question of vice versus virtue. Even though she has some fear that the discovery of her true identity may frighten Loveless away, she puts her trust in the charms of that virtue for whose sake "holy Martyrs perished." Amanda seems to imply that she belongs to the ranks of these holy martyrs;

that she has sacrificed herself, as it were, by assuming a "Disguise of vicious Love" in order to "lure this wand'ring Falcon back to Love and Virtue." She takes on the role of an instrument of Heaven through whom the sinner Loveless is to be reclaimed. In this light her consent to Young Worthy's plot becomes more acceptable. As one of the critics of sentimental drama points out, "the sentimentalist may feel that when he intervenes on the side of virtue against debauchery and evil, he is directly inspired by Heaven, and is a kind of guardian angel."¹³

Loveless is at this point still completely unreformed. His comment on Amanda's profession of "an Hope that carries her to the brighter Regions of eternal Day" proves that he has not yet been reclaimed by love, vicious or virtuous: "Humh! I thought her last Night's Humour was too good to hold. I suppose, by and by, she'll ask me to go to Church with her" (p. 77). Even Loveless' admission that there may indeed exist a virtuous woman in no way implies that he is particularly concerned with such a woman. Only when Amanda, after having asked what excuse Loveless could offer for a man "who leaves the Bosom of a virtuous Wife . . . for the abandon'd Pleasures of deceitful Prostitutes," taxes him with his broken vows, does he suddenly find his thoughts stricken "with Horror and Remorse" (p. 78). But even then he remains ignorant of Amanda's identity. Amanda hesitates to reveal herself, claiming "the Word's too weighty

for my faltering Tongue, and my Soul sinks beneath the fatal Burden" (p. 79). In spite of Loveless' interest and concern, the day is not yet won: it takes a fainting fit to make his heart bleed for her distress. When, in his efforts to revive her, he assures her that she has "rais'd a Thought within /him/ that shocks /his/ Soul" (p. 79), Amanda utters the words, "'tis done," and rises. Paul Parnell is inclined to take her fainting "as a strategem allowable under the circumstances," and calls her comment, "'tis done," "cryptic (or businesslike)."¹⁴ While this explanation is certainly tenable, it fails to indicate the total implication of the passage. The words "'tis done," particularly in conjunction with those immediately following, "the Conflict's past, and Heaven bids me speak undaunted" (p. 79), tend to emphasize Amanda's view of herself as an instrument of God. Thus the words "'tis done" may imply that she has overcome the weakness of her sex, indicated earlier by her hesitancy, and is ready to fulfill her God-assigned mission. This reading seems to be supported by Parnell's statement that the sentimental hero (or heroine)--a role which Amanda apparently plays--is "assuming the part of Christ, or at least Christ's vice-regent."¹⁵ Loveless' ensuing words and actions affirm Amanda's Christlike stature: he kneels to her; he asks her to "seal his Pardon with /her/ trembling Lips"; he assures her that she has "rous'd /him/ from /his/ deep Lethargy of Vice"; and he proclaims his intention to lie

prostrate, "sigh his Shame, and wash away his Crimes in never ending Tears of Penitence" (p. 80). Amanda's assurance that she will "wash away the memory of her past wrongs in Tears of flowing Joy," only emphasizes her role, and Loveless' rather belated and cursory remark that "despite of all his Follies, kind Heaven resolv'd his Happiness," does nothing to remove her from her elevated position.

Amanda's near perfection and virtue not only cause Loveless, to change completely, suddenly, and irrevocably, but her ennobling influence and example also bring about a reform of Young Worthy and Sir Wisewould. Young Worthy, as "the generous author" of Amanda's happiness, "has aton'd for all the Looseness of his Character" by aiding in reclaiming Loveless and thus is deserving of being saved. Even though he was still determined to cheat Sir Wisewould and admitted that he had "sworn false Oaths to promote Narcissa's love" (p. 73), when they set out for church, he refuses a few hours later the bond Loveless and Elder Worthy offer to Sir Wisewould with the words: "I should blush to be obliged to that Degree: Therefore, Sir William, as the first Proof of that Respect and Duty I owe a Father, I here, unasked, return your Bond, and will henceforth expect nothing from you, but as my Conduct will deserve it" (p. 85). In the world of the fifth act of Love's Last Shift such offers can be made with impunity: Amanda very definitely reaffirms the

values and views of that world when she says: "This is indeed a generous Act; methinks 'twere Pity it should go unrewarded" (p. 80). Of course, generous acts do not go unrewarded. Sir Wisewould, not to be outdone, is "vanquish'd" and calls "Heaven's Blessings" on Young Worthy and Narcissa. All he asks in return for his generosity is that Young Worthy "let the World know 'twas he set him upon his legs again."

The "little Musick" that ends the play drives home the moral with a will: the basis of a happy life is a virtuous wife. Marriage, dissatisfied with his state, is told:

Go home, unhappy Wretch, and mourn
For all thy guilty Passions past;
There thou shalt find those Joys return
Which shall for ever, ever last
(p. 90).

Thus the play that was "lewd for above four acts" ends with a panegyric of "the chaste raptures of a virtuous Love" and asserts that they will last forever after.

It is not surprising that Cibber's play has been called sentimental by most critics. It certainly takes the view that virtue, far from being merely its own reward, may look for tangible rewards here and now; that near perfection is attainable, and that good intentions and good example will keep a reformed character safe.

ii

The view of human nature expressed at the end of Love's Last Shift is in opposition not only to the realities of life, but also to orthodox Christianity. A belief in the perfectibility of man, as it is implied in the final

scenes of Cibber's play, contradicts the concept of man as fallen and inclined toward sin. Moreover, experience, as well as Christianity, teaches that even the best resolutions may fail and that man is unable to predict accurately his future actions and behavior. Vanbrugh, apparently reluctant to accept Cibber's pat and glib assertion of a 'happy ever after' in this world, took it upon himself to expose the fallacy of Cibber's view and to show in The Relapse how long 'for ever, ever' may really last.

Notwithstanding the favorable reception accorded The Relapse, however, the preface to the play's first edition (dated 1697) implies that Vanbrugh was attacked from some quarters on account of the play's "Blasphemy and Bawdy."¹⁶ Denying the truth of these charges, Vanbrugh there remarked flippantly--and, as the near future was to prove, prophetically--that he despaired of the "Saints (your thorough-pac'd ones I mean, with screw'd Faces and wry Mouths),"¹⁷ whom nobody could ever please. It may be difficult to determine whether this remark was caused by "a rumor . . . that some divine was meditating a sally against the theatre," a possibility entertained by Dobree.¹⁸ It is, however, a matter of record that a non-juring divine did make such a sally in 1698. He was Jeremy Collier and the impressive title of his "sally" was A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage: Together With the Sense of Antiquity Upon this Argument.¹⁹

Attacks on the stage were no novelty; they had been occurring since antiquity, as Professor Joseph Wood Krutch points out.²⁰ But what made Collier's attempt to destroy the theater noteworthy, was the abandon with which he threw himself into the task: "His was the genuine and irritating zeal of the reformer. From this fact arose his greatest merit and his greatest defects. Nothing is so likely as this same zeal to inspire confidence and enthusiasm, and on the other hand, nothing is so sure to spoil the temper and banish urbanity." ²¹

Collier's Short View starts with a definition of the purpose of the theater, "one which completely rejects the theater as a mirror held to nature and instead states baldly that "the Business of Plays is to recommend Virtue and dis-countenance Vice."²² If this definition were acceptable--and Collier allows no doubt but that it is--then the English stage of his time certainly did not fulfill its purpose. Collier, furthermore, established four main kinds of offenses committed by the playwrights, and systematically ploughed his way through them.

The first of these offenses is "Smuttiness of Expression." Under this heading Collier mentions The Relapse as one of the plays that "strike sometimes upon this Sand." The kind of immodesty of expression contained in the play tends, he says, "to stain the Imagination, to awaken Folly, and to weaken the Defences of Virtue."²³ Collier considers

it not only a moral but also an artistic failure to put "smutty language" into the mouths of ladies; artistically it is a violation of decorum, because it is contrary to the character and nature of ladies. To present women as silly or mad--as he accuses Vanbrugh of doing in the character of Heyden--is no excuse, and he holds up Terence and Plautus as examples of comic writers who observed the niceties of the stage. Even Aristophanes, atheist though he was, did not allow married women to be debauched. A look at the English stage at the time between Queen Elizabeth and Charles II shows that it, too, was superior to the present stage--if one disregards Shakespeare, who "is too guilty to make an Evidence."

After more excursions into all kinds of side issues, Collier gets to his second charge against the stage: profaneness. This he subdivides into two categories: cursing and swearing, and abuse of religion and holy Scripture. In the first category The Relapse, together with The Provok'd Wife, are mentioned as "particularly scandalous." Collier reminds his readers that swearing is not only a violation of divine law, but also of the laws of the state (not to mention that it is unbecoming to a gentleman).

Turning to the second degree of profaneness, Collier is seen at his most zealous and enthusiastic. He singles out Dryden as particularly guilty of this offense, and, when he gets to The Relapse, hardly one character

escapes his censure. He takes exception to Lord Foppington's comments on church services, and Young Fashion's remark that he has "kick'd Conscience down stairs" is as sharply criticized as Berinthia's observation when Worthy solicits her help in seducing Amanda: "Where there is necessity a Christian is bound to help his neighbor." When Worthy expresses his gratitude to Berinthia in these words, "Thou Angel of Light, let me fall down and adore Thee," Collier calls it "a most Seraphic compliment to a Procuress."²⁴ Even Amanda does not escape unscathed. Her angry exclamation, "what slippery stuff are men made of! Sure the account of their creation is false, and 'twas woman's rib that they were form'd of," is interpreted by Collier as casting doubt on the truth of Scripture: "Thus the Lady abuses her self, together with the Scripture, and shews her Sense, and her Religion, to be much of a Size."²⁵ In his eagerness to condemn, Collier reads blasphemy even into such innocent remarks as Young Fashion's crediting providence with giving him a chance to cheat his brother, and Berinthia's telling Amanda that Worthy used her "like a text." "These," Collier exclaims, "are outrageous Provocations; enough to arm all Nature in Revenge; to exhaust the Judgments of Heaven and sink the Island in the Sea." He warns the authors of such outrages against being lulled into a false sense of security because they have escaped punishment so far:

"God is not mock'd, not without Danger, they may be assured."²⁶

After again having shown the ancients to have been better and purer, Collier turns to his third charge, the abuse of the clergy, and again he singles out The Relapse as "more singularly abusive." His attack centers on the presentation of Bull, the chaplain. He finds fault with Bull's character and language, as well as with the treatment accorded him by others. To emphasize the depravity of the English stage, Collier offers lengthy proof that playwrights of other ages and nationalities either did not bring clergymen on the stage at all or else, if they did, treated them with the respect their office demands: "But our Poets steer by another Compass: Their Aim is to destroy Religion; their Preaching is against Sermons; and their Business, but Diversion at the best. In short, let the character be never so well managed, no Christian Priest (especially) ought to come upon the Stage."²⁷

In this section Collier (unwittingly perhaps) becomes quite entertaining, by demanding due respect not only for Christian priests--"to outrage the Ministers of Religion is in effect to deny the being, or Providence of God"²⁸--but insisting with a nice show of impartiality that even pagan priests be treated with respect and preserved from ridicule. In case somebody should accuse him of pride--as some indeed did later--Collier points out that "Humility obliges no Man to desert his Trust; to throw up his Privilege; and prove false to his Character."²⁹

From the abuse of the clergy, Collier turns to his last charge: "The Stage-poets make their Principal Characters Vitious and reward them at the End of the Play." In support of this charge Collier appeals to Nature, and points out that she clearly differentiates between virtue and vice:

The first has all the Sweetness, Charm and Graces imaginable; the other has the Air of a Post ill carved into a Monster, and looks both foolish and Frightful together. These are the native appearances of Good and Evil. And they that endeavour to blot the Distinction, to rub out the Colours, or change the Marks, are extremely to blame. . . . To put Lewdness into a thriving Condition, . . . and to treat it with Ceremony and Respect, is the Way to confound the Understanding, fortifie the Charm, and make Mischief invincible. Innocence is often owing to Fear, and Appetite is kept under by Shame; but when these Restraints are once taken off, when Profit and Liberty lie on the same side, and a Man can Debauch himself into Credit, what can be expected in such a Case, but that Pleasure should grow absolute, and Madness carry all before it? The Stage seems eager to bring Matters to this issue.³⁰

He elaborates on this theme at great length, offering examples from the plays of Dryden, Congreve, and Wycherley. As usual he contrasts the present stage with that of the past, to the advantage of the latter. Surprisingly, The Relapse does not at all figure in this argument, but the reason for this omission becomes apparent when one discovers that "he is so generous to bestow a Chapter entire upon" The Relapse.³¹

As Vanbrugh points out in A Short Vindication of the Relapse and the Provok'd Wife, from Immorality and Profaneness, Collier's chapter on The Relapse exceeds the limits that the title of his treatise implies: he damns the play not only on moral but also on artistic grounds. Explaining his special attention to The Relapse by its author's swaggering "so much in his Preface," Collier sets out to examine the play "briefly in the Fable, the Moral, the Characters, etc."³² After giving the barest outline of the Young Fashion-Hoyden plot, he then observes "that there is a Misnommer [sic] in the Title"--Amanda and Loveless are of inferior interest in the play. "The Intrigue, and the Discovery, the great Revolution and Success, turns upon Young Fashion. He, without Competition, is the Principal Person in the Comedy. And therefore the Younger Brother, or the Fortunate Cheat, had been a much more proper Name."³³ The moral, Collier observes, is vicious: "It points the wrong Way, and puts the Prize into the wrong Hand."³⁴ Young Fashion is a rake, a blasphemer, and a cheat, who does not deserve to be rewarded with Hoyden and her fortune. The instructions that the play provides are, according to Collier, first, that younger brothers ought to squander their fortune because, "as Fashion Blasphemously applies it, Providence takes care of Men of Merit";³⁵ second, that one ought not to have scruples, because necessity is an excuse for any action.

Turning back to the plot, Collier attacks The Relapse

for lack of verisimilitude. No man of Lord Foppington's standing would contract for a marriage without personal contact; nor would a Justice of the Peace be as easily taken in as Sir Tunbelly. The fact that his house is well guarded and Hoyden locked up at the approach of strangers shows him to be a cautious man. Yet, solely on the strength of Coupler's letter, he accepts Young Fashion without question. This behavior would brand Lord Foppington and Sir Tunbelly as fools. And, "if they are /fools/, where lies the Cunning in over-reaching them? . . . If they are not Fools, why does the Poet make them so? . . . Take them either way, and the Plot miscarries. The first supposition makes it dull, and the latter, incredible."³⁶

Taking up the "manners" of the play, Collier makes it clear that he considers they should be synonymous with decorum. To violate the rules of decorum (or manners) "is to desert Nature and makes the Play appear monstrous and Chimerical."³⁷ The rules of decorum demand that women be modest, because their "character" is modesty. Berinthia violates decorum by being "impudent and Profane." If she were "kick'd or exposed," her impudence and lack of modesty could be justified. She meets with no such fate, however, but "goes off without Censure or Disadvantage." Hoyden, whose condition does not suit her name, and whose behavior and speech are out of character for the daughter of a "Deputy Lieutenant," also meets with Collier's disapproval. Yet, Collier also blames

Vanbrugh for having allowed Hoyden too much wit occasionally.

He raises the same objection against Lord Foppington, who, while being presented as a fool and a fop, is at times allowed to "deviate into sense." The passages Collier quotes in support of this objection hardly justify his view that "this Drolling has too much spirit, the Air of it is too free, and too handsomely turn'd for Lord Fopplington's [sic] Character. Sir Tunbelly falls into the same Misfortune of a Wit, and rallies above the force of his Capacity."³⁸

By allowing his "clock-heads" witty lines, Vanbrugh does more than merely violate decorum; he deprives his "Men of Sense" of some much needed witticisms. Collier cites several examples from speeches of Loveless and Young Fashion to show how much in need of good lines they were. But he particularly singles out Worthy, "the Relapser's fine Gentleman," to demonstrate Vanbrugh's want of wit. His attack on Worthy centers on the "seduction scene" in act five, but he obviously misreads a passage in the scene, as Vanbrugh points out in the Short Vindication.³⁹ What is indeed surprising--for one whose main interest is in the question of morality--is Collier's comment on Worthy's sudden conversion: "His passion is metamorphos'd in the Turn of a hand: He is refined into a Platonick Admirer, and goes off as like a Town Spark as you would wish. And so much for the Poet's fine Gentleman."⁴⁰

It is hardly worthwhile to go into Collier's pedantic argument concerning Vanbrugh's alleged violation of the three unities of time, place, and action. His argument concerning the lack of unity of action only repeats what he had said earlier in support of his argument against the title of The Relapse: Amanda, Loveless, and Berinthia are "second rate Characters. . . . Their Interest is perfectly Foreign and they are neither Friends nor Enemies to the Plot."⁴¹ The only reason for repeating this statement is that the same observations concerning the "main" plot of The Relapse have been made by numerous critics since.

Collier refrains in this particular chapter from repeating his charges of immorality and profaneness. He only observes "that the Author was sensible of this objection," but pretended ignorance when, in the Preface to the play, he disclaimed the presence of any bawdy or profane expressions and referred the reader to the text: "To out-face Evidence in this manner is next to affirming there's no such Sin as Blasphemy, which is the greatest Blasphemy of all."⁴² But in the last few lines of the chapter on The Relapse he does conduct a purely personal attack on Vanbrugh's temper and talent, suggesting that his own indignation was motivated at least to a considerable degree by personal considerations.

In the last chapter of his treatise, Collier cites at great length, and with a nice show of impartiality, pagan

and Christian writers to prove "that Plays have generally been look'd on as the Nurseries of Vice, the Corrupters of Youth, and the Grievance of the Country where they were suffer'd."⁴³ Since this last chapter has no particular bearing on The Relapse, we may leave the Reverend Collier here, but not without noting that the aim of his treatise was, as his last chapter reveals, not the reform, but the destruction of the theater.

If the space allowed to the review of Collier's criticism of The Relapse appears excessive, two reasons can be offered in justification: first, it is the longest, if not the most valid, criticism of the play; and second, its influence on the criticism of Restoration comedy is felt even today. Rare indeed is the critic, sympathetic or adverse, who does not become involved in the questions of the morality or immorality of Restoration comedy.

Collier's attack on the stage led understandably to the publication of a considerable number of books and pamphlets participating in the controversy. Several of the poets under attack eventually came out with an answer. Dryden, in the Preface to the Fables (1700), pleads guilty to some of the charges and in general adopts a conciliatory attitude, even though he insists that Collier went too far. Congreve and Vanbrugh, too, came to the defense of their plays. Congreve's Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations etc. from the Old Batchelor, Double

Dealer, Love for Love, Mourning Bride. By the Author of these Plays, appeared in 1698. So did Vanbrugh's Short Vindication. John Dennis, who had earlier defended tragedy against Rymer's attack, now rushed to the defense of comedy and the stage in general.⁴⁴ There is, however, no need to go into all the publications occasioned by Collier's Short View here. A complete bibliography of the Collier controversy can be found in Professor Krutch's book.⁴⁵

iii

It is outside the scope of this study to discuss the deterioration of comedy in the eighteenth century and the attempts to return to the "old" comedy made by Goldsmith and Sheridan. By the early nineteenth century, Restoration comedy had fallen into disrepute; yet William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, and Leigh Hunt deserve credit for their attempt to revive the comedy of the past age. Hazlitt, in his "Lectures on the Comic Writers," ignores the question of morality and attempts to judge the comedy strictly from the point of view of literary merit. He gives Vanbrugh credit for having "a masterly eye to the advantages which certain accidental situations of character present to him on the spot, and [of executing] the most difficult theatrical movements at a moment's warning."⁴⁶ As an example of such a scene, Hazlitt mentions the one in The Relapse where Loveless pulls Berinthia into her closet. He praises Lord Foppington as "a most splendid caricature" and Hoyden--despite her want

of sentiment--as "a fine bouncing piece of flesh and blood." Sir Tunbilly's presence is "a cure for gravity; and he is a standing satire upon himself and the class in natural history to which he belonged."⁴⁷ That Hazlitt confines his remarks on The Relapse (with exception of the closet scene) to the Young Fashion-Hoyden plot suggests that he considered it the more important and the artistically more successful of the two.

While Hazlitt ignores the moral issue in Restoration comedy, Lamb denies its validity as a criterion of judgment in his essay "On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century."⁴⁸ Lamb's essay is too well known to need discussion, and he moreover confines his observations mostly to the comedies of Wycherley and Congreve. In his insistence on the remoteness of the comedies from life, however, he seems to deprive them of a good part of their value. In order to be artistically valuable works of art, they ought to be more than "the passing pageant of an evening."⁴⁹

Leigh Hunt made a valiant effort toward the revival of Restoration comedy with his edition of The Dramatic Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar.⁵⁰ In the biographical notes he presents Vanbrugh as a writer lacking in refinement, but free "from all cant and nonsense." "Of feeling, . . . in the sentimental sense," Hunt states with apparent approval, "Vanbrugh shows little or none. He seems to have thought it foreign to the satire and mirth of comedy."⁵¹ Dismissing the charge that Vanbrugh had "hurt

the moral" by allowing the penitent and reformed Loveless of Cibber's Love's Last Shift to "fall into his old ways again" in The Relapse, Hunt asserts that "Vanbrugh laughed at the morals of Cibber. He knew that so flimsy and canting a teacher could only teach pretences; and in undoing his work he left society to find out something better."⁵²

Regrettably, these attempts to arrive at a more detached and valid point of view concerning Restoration comedy were rudely interrupted by Macaulay's review of Hunt's edition. Macaulay follows Collier's attack to a remarkable degree, even though he assumes the pose of the objective, even liberal, critic when he asserts his belief that any work that throws light on a period of history deserves attention. But he follows this assertion with the bald statement that "this part Restoration comedy of our literature is a disgrace to our language and our national character."⁵³ Like Collier, he stresses the dangerous influence that the constant connection of the immoral with the attractive may have on "the imagination of the young and susceptible." He dismisses Lamb's essay and insists on the realism of the comedy, only to indict it for its lack of morals. Contrary to Lamb's theory, morality enters "constantly into that world of the comedies", a sound morality and an unsound morality; the sound morality to be insulted, derided, associated with everything mean and hateful; the unsound morality to be set off to every advantage, and inculcated by all methods, direct and indirect."⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, Macaulay pays

tribute to Collier, even though he does not absolve him from all faults. One of these, according to Macaulay, is Collier's failure to distinguish between the voice of the poet and that of a character in the play, as for instance in the case of Lord Foppington in The Relapse. Since Macaulay never wrote the essay on Vanbrugh and Farquhar promised at the end of his review, this remained his only reference to Vanbrugh.

Adolphus Ward's criticism seems to vacillate between the moralistic point of view of Macaulay and the literary emphasis of Hazlitt. He acknowledges Vanbrugh's artistic achievement when he claims that he is "unsurpassed by any of our post-Restoration writers in the vivacity, gaiety, and ease of his prose."⁵⁵ He has praise for "the admirable Lord Foppington," and considers the "by-plot" (Young Fashion-Hoyden intrigue) of The Relapse "one of the most amusing things in later English comedy."⁵⁶ Yet Ward pronounces Vanbrugh's morality as even below that of Congreve--if one can even think of morality in connection with him at all: "Such is the levity of this author that it is difficult to weigh even his sins in a very serious balance."⁵⁷ Without offering any judgment as to the morality of Love's Last Shift, Ward says of The Relapse that "it would be difficult to point to a more recklessly immoral production than this one of Vanbrugh's, notwithstanding the triumphant final assertion of the strength of female virtue in the person of the wronged

and tempted wife. Her faithless husband goes scotfree for his sins."⁵⁸ This last statement implies that Ward might approve of Cibber's theodicy: virtue is necessarily rewarded and sin punished.

It would be reasonable to assume that with the changed outlook on morality in general which followed the passing of the Victorian Age there also occurred a change in the outlook on the merits of Restoration drama. Certainly there seems to have been an increase in interest in Restoration comedy, as is indicated by the number of works on various aspects of the comedies, published in the course of the twentieth century.⁵⁹ Many of the Restoration writers found new editors and critical scholars who attempted to throw new light on a specific writer and his work. Among the latter, Professor Dale Underwood's study of Etherege is outstanding.⁶⁰ In spite of the interest in the period, however, there is very little critical material on Vanbrugh. He only rates a chapter in the majority of the works dealing with the Restoration period, or else is mentioned in various articles and books as an example for a point the author wants to make. Frequently he is mentioned as the dramatist of the period whose plays moved towards sentimentalism. This critical point of view, in turn, leads other critics to point to Vanbrugh as the last writer in the tradition of "true" comedy.

Most often the charge of sentimentality against

Vanbrugh is based on the conversion scene in The Relapse. Henry T. E. Perry praises Vanbrugh as a comic writer of great achievement for his handling of the closet scene in The Relapse, and for his creation of Lord Foppington, yet he qualifies his praise with the observation that Vanbrugh bowed to the public taste in the Amanda-Worthy scene: "The significant development in The Relapse is not the weakness of Loveless, but the strength of Amanda; from now on marital infidelity must not be treated lightly by the comic Muse."⁶¹ Perry attempts to explain Vanbrugh's failure as a comic writer by the latter's awareness of the imperfections of the world of comedy; attempting to "get out of the comic underworld," he fails; trying to "free himself from the solid earth," he only sinks "back into the mawkish mire of sentimentality."⁶²

Professor Krutch, too, recognizes that a change in comedy occurred with Vanbrugh: "a start toward a morally better comedy had been made by him."⁶³ Krutch, however, denies that Vanbrugh's comedies can be justly called sentimental. Even though he mingled some of the "freedom" and "cynicism" (which Krutch apparently considers typical of the Restoration proper) "with serious discussions of ethical problems and not a little sentiment," Vanbrugh's plays were too realistic and satiric to qualify as sentimental.⁶⁴

David Berkeley, in his discussion of préciosité and the use of précieuse language, credits Vanbrugh with the

deliberate use of the language of the précieuses for comic purpose in the garden scene between Loveless and Berinthia.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Berkeley claims that Worthy's language in the conversion scene of The Relapse constitutes a serious use of précieuse language and thus a deviation on the part of Vanbrugh from his purpose to treat the material of Love's Last Shift realistically.⁶⁶ On the basis of this conclusion, Berkeley lists Worthy among his twenty-three "penitent rakes," claiming that Worthy "rises to a state of purity far above that of the reformed Loveless of Love's Last Shift."⁶⁷

Berkeley's view is not shared by Ernest Bernbaum, who considers the conversion scene in The Relapse insufficient evidence in support of a charge of sentimentalism against Vanbrugh. "The passage," Bernbaum states, "is brief and does not defeat the author's purpose, which was to cast doubt on the perfection of Amanda and the perfectibility of Loveless."⁶⁸

The authors of probably the longest single study of Vanbrugh, Paul Mueschke and Jeannette Fleischer,⁶⁹ also defend him against the charge of sentimentalism, but base their defense on different reasons. In the first place, they claim that the critics accusing Vanbrugh of sentimentalism tend to confuse sentimentalism with common sense. Besides, Worthy's conversion is only conditional; his language may be that of sentimentalism, but his actions follow the code of common sense. It is not a sign of sentimentalism, Mueschke and

Fleischer assert, to admire chastity or to admit that a woman has a heart.

Another frequent objection to Vanbrugh's plays, and one that is as old as the Collier controversy, is directed against their immorality. Modern critics in general offer reasons for their objections different from those set forth by Collier. Palmer, for instance, pronounces Vanbrugh's plays immoral because of their failure to present a consistent moral view. Instead, Palmer claims, they vacillate between Vanbrugh's personal moral view (which considers adultery no laughing matter and is actually closer to that of the reformers than of the Restoration rakes), and that of the comedies of Congreve and Wycherley (into which, in Palmer's view, the moral aspects of adultery never even entered). Thus Vanbrugh "hesitates between two kingdoms," and "was content to be inspired by the old theatre rather than by the new life to which he belonged."⁷⁰ This split in Vanbrugh's moral outlook, Palmer maintains, deprives the reader of a measure of moral judgment within the context of the plays and sends him "for refuge to the conventions of his own well-regulated life of every day."⁷¹ And by these conventions, Palmer claims, Vanbrugh's plays are morally offensive.

Walter A. Houghton follows a similar line of thought in his essay in defense of "Lamb's Criticism of Restoration Comedy."⁷² He claims that Lamb, aware of the fact that

Wycherley and Congreve wrote from their observation of the life of their time, called Restoration comedy "artificial" only in contrast to the "drama of common life." To later generations the world of Wycherley and Congreve was a never-never-land whose moral standards were alien and thus could not offend. Vanbrugh, precisely because he approaches the moral standards of a later audience, and because he depicts sex passionately (instead of as a casual pastime), deserves to be charged with immorality.

Vanbrugh's most recent editor, Bonamy Dobrée, points in the same direction in claiming that with Vanbrugh "love is no longer a battle of the wits, but a struggle of desire against conscience. The persons of his plays commit adultery with the full knowledge that they are acting contrary to their own morality."⁷³ Dobrée considers this "confusion of values" on the part of Vanbrugh the cause of "an atmosphere of lasciviousness" which sometimes enters into his plays. While giving Vanbrugh credit for being "full of high spirits, fun, and frolic," Dobrée considers him a rather indifferent writer: "His plays can add nothing either to our knowledge of life or to our aesthetic experience."⁷⁴ Moreover, Dobrée also picks up Collier's objection to the title of The Relapse, whose main interest, he believes, centers not on Amanda, Loveless, and Berinthia, but on the Young Fashion- Hoyden plot.

A summary of the criticism of Vanbrugh's work--even one as admittedly incomplete as the above--leads to the conclusion that very little has been done to determine his

position in the canon of Restoration comedy and to provide a valid interpretation of his plays. Other writers of the period have fared better. But Vanbrugh has in most instances rated no more than a condescending pat on the back, at best. Frequently the criticism of his plays is not based on a careful and objective reading. Thus many critics allow him not much standing as a writer, but instead praise him as a kind, easy-going man. While such personal praise constitutes a definite improvement over Collier, it is Vanbrugh's work, rather than his character, that offers a legitimate subject for literary scholarship and that needs and deserves more attention than it has received so far.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER I

¹Leigh Hunt apparently was first in selecting whom he considered the major comic writers of the Restoration in his edition of The Drama of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar (London, 1840). These four are not always considered together: some writers include Etherege; others omit Farquhar; still others confine themselves to Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve. Yet the four chosen by Hunt (with the addition of Etherege) are most frequently encountered in works dealing with the comic writers of the Restoration.

²This trend started with Jeremy Collier, who specifically singled out Vanbrugh (although not only Vanbrugh) for his attack.

³The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, Bonamy Dobree, ed. 4 vols. (London, 1927), I, 6; hereafter referred to as Works.

⁴Arthur Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama (East Lansing, Mich., 1957), p. 33.

⁵Thomas Davies, Dramatic Miscellanies (1784), quoted in Ernest Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), p. 1. Sherbo considers Davies' statement unreliable.

⁶Love's Last Shift or The Fool in Fashion, in The Dramatic Works of Colley Cibber, Esq., 4 vols. (London, 1760), vol. I, p. 91. All subsequent references to the play, appearing in the text, are to this edition.

⁷Works, I, 112.

⁸Cf. David Berkeley, "The Penitent Rake in Restoration Comedy," MP, XLIX(1952), 223-33.

⁹Worthy of Vanbrugh's Relapse also belongs to this category. His position will be discussed in detail in chapter III.

¹⁰The First Modern Comedies (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 130.

¹¹This usage appears to be common in the period, cf. Etherege, The Man of Mode, III, iii, 101.

¹²Cf. for instance, Selected Lyrics and Satires of John Wilmot Second Earl of Rochester, Ronald Duncan, ed. (London, 1948), p. 77.

¹³Paul Parnell, "The Sentimental Mask," Restoration Comedy: Modern Essays in Criticism, John Loftis, ed. (New York, 1966), p. 288.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 291.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 293.

¹⁶Works, I, 11.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁸Ibid., p. xvi.

¹⁹All references to the Short View are to the third edition (London, 1698).

²⁰Comedy and Conscience After the Restoration (New York, 1949), especially chapters V and VI.

²¹Ibid., p. 102.

²²Short View, p. 1.

²³Ibid., p. 5.

²⁴Ibid., p. 80.

²⁵Ibid., p. 80.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 84-85.

²⁷Ibid., p. 124.

²⁸Ibid., p. 124.

²⁹Ibid., p. 137.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 140-41.

³¹Vanbrugh, John. A Short Vindication of the Relapse and the Prov'd Wife From Immorality and Profaneness, by the Author, Works, I, 209.

³²Short View, p. 209.

³³Ibid., p. 210. Cf. Bonamy Dobrée's criticism cited below.

- ³⁴Ibid., p. 210.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 211.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 218.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 219.
- ³⁸Ibid., p. 224.
- ³⁹Works, I, 215.
- ⁴⁰Short View, p. 227.
- ⁴¹Ibid., pp. 230-21.
- ⁴²Ibid., p. 232.
- ⁴³Ibid., p. 233.
- ⁴⁴The Usefulness of the Stage to the Happiness of Mankind (1698): The State of Defended-Occasioned by Mr. Law's Pamphlet (1726).
- ⁴⁵Comedy and Conscience, pp. 267-70.
- ⁴⁶The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, 21 vols., P. P. Howe, ed. (London, 1930), vol. VI, p. 79.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 80.
- ⁴⁸The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, 7 vols., E. V. Lucas, ed. (London, 1903), vol. II, pp. 141-147.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 142.
- ⁵⁰With Biographical and Critical Notes, London, 1840.
- ⁵¹Ibid., p. lvii.
- ⁵²Ibid., p. lvii.
- ⁵³The Complete Works of Lord Macaulay, 10 vols., Lady Trevelyan, ed. (New York, 1905), vol. III, p. 114.
- ⁵⁴Ibid., p. 120.
- ⁵⁵Adolphus W. Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne, 3 vols. (London, 1875, 1899), vol. III, p. 477.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 478-79.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 478.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 478.

⁵⁹Here are some of the more important works in chronological order: John Palmer, The Comedy of Manners (London, 1913); Allardyce Nicoll, Restoration Drama: 1660-1700 (London, 1923); Joseph Wood Krutch, Comedy and Conscience After the Restoration (New York, 1924); Bonamy Dobrée, Restoration Comedy: 1660-1720 (London, 1924); Henry T. E. Perry, The Comic Spirit in Restoration Comedy (New Haven, 1925); John Wilcox, The Relation of Moliere to Restoration Comedy (New York, 1938); John H. Smith, The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy (Cambridge, Mass., 1948); Norman Holland, The First Modern Comedies (Cambridge, Mass., 1959).

⁶⁰Dale Underwood, Etherege and the Seventeenth Century Comedy of Manners (New Haven, 1957).

⁶¹The Comic Spirit in Restoration Comedy (New York, 1925), p. 137.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 105-6.

⁶³Comedy and Conscience, p. 256.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 214-15.

⁶⁵"Preciosite and the Restoration Comedy of Manners," HLQ, XVIII (1955), 109-28.

⁶⁶"The Penitent Rake," MP, XLIX, 232.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 233.

⁶⁸The Drama of Sensibility, p. 77.

⁶⁹"A Re-Evaluation of Vanbrugh," PMLA, XLIX (1934), 848-89.

⁷⁰Comedy of Manners, p. 236.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 295-96.

⁷²ELH, X (1943), 61-72.

⁷³Restoration Comedy, p. 157.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 151-52.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM

i

As the preceding chapter shows, Vanbrugh's work is dismissed by most critics as amusing but unimportant. According to Dobrée, whose comment is fairly typical, Vanbrugh "presented life as he saw it, but he saw it no differently from the hundred and one people with whom he daily mingled."¹ This claim seems rather odd in view of Vanbrugh's stated purpose in writing The Relapse: the refutation of Colley Cibber's view of life presented in Love's Last Shift. Obviously Vanbrugh saw life differently from Cibber and those who received his play with "honest tears." The view of life presented in The Relapse is admittedly neither new nor uniquely Vanbrugh's: it is the view of orthodox Christianity. But the very fact that a play like Love's Last Shift could be written and acclaimed may also suggest that a dramatic reiteration of the orthodox Christian view of life was in itself a justifiable undertaking.

In rejecting Cibber's optimistic and unrealistic assertion of a "happy ever after" with which his play ends, Vanbrugh stresses in The Relapse two important facts of human nature: one, a victory over natural inclinations is achieved only with considerable difficulties and sacrifices;

and, two, it cannot be considered permanent because the battle against temptation is a continual process and every moral victory is precarious.

For the purpose of presenting his opposition to Cibber's view of life dramatically, Vanbrugh takes the main characters of Love's Last Shift--Amanda, Loveless, and Sir Novelty--and recreates their situation at the end of Cibber's play. The introduction of a number of new characters (mainly in the Young Fashion-Hoyden plot) and the expansion of the scene of action enable the dramatist to investigate the central problem of The Relapse--"the Frailty of Mankind"--as it affects various characters in various situations, and thus to reach a more valid conclusion concerning the reformation of man than Cibber did.

The problem of the "Frailty of Mankind," treated in The Relapse, is closely related to that posed by Cibber in Love's Last Shift: man's dilemma when faced with opposing demands of conscience and desire. Vanbrugh, however, intensifies the conflict by making it central to both plots, and moreover--unwilling to accept Cibber's pat solution and glib assertion of the permanence of a moral victory--considers the duration of such a victory as an important part of the problem of human weakness.

Even a tentative resolution of the conflict between reason and the passions would depend to a considerable degree on one's view of human nature and the end of human

existence. At Vanbrugh's time the three most influential ideologies concerned with these questions were Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Christianity.

To appreciate the juxtaposition and interaction of these ideologies--and to arrive at an understanding of the meaning of The Relapse--the reader needs to understand the concept of the Stoic and the Epicurean in the seventeenth century. Frequently, the contemporary concept of the Stoic was not based on a careful study of the works of the Stoic philosophers.² The main qualities usually attributed to the Stoic were, one, that he advocated the complete suppression of the passions; two, that he was pagan; and, three, that he put complete trust in the efficacy of human reason.³ The second of these points applied, of course, to all ancient philosophies and their adherents. Many of the precepts of Stoicism, however, appeared to later writers not only admirable but very close to, or even identical with, Christian thought. The "Neostoics" of the Renaissance, particularly Justus Lipsius and Guillaume Du Vair, justified their attempts to reconcile stoic philosophy with Christian thought by pointing out that "no kinde of philosophie is more profitable and neerer approaching Christianitie (as S. Hierome saith) then the philosophie of the Stoicks."⁴ While insisting on the superiority of Christian doctrine to that of the Stoics who, after all, were not "born and bred in the

true light of the Gospel," and rejecting such stoic precepts as are contradictory to Christian beliefs,⁵ both Lipsius and Du Vair adopt almost without reservation the stoic ideal of the rule of reason. In order to be happy, i.e., virtuous (or wise), we need "to purge our minds of all such passions as do arise in them, and with the smoake of them darken and obscure the eye of reason."⁶ Thus the rule of reason is the cornerstone of Neostoicism as it was of Stoicism. It is true that both Du Vair and Lipsius make allowances for the passion evoked by witnessing the miseries of one's fellow man. Yet, while conceding that "we are not greatly to be blamed" for suffering with others in their miseries, Du Vair cautions against adopting "into our selves their griefes, or to darken the cleernes of our mindes with the smoake of their miseries."⁷ Lipsius, who "was more the systematic philosopher,"⁸ "carefully distinguishes pity from that fundamental Stoic vertue, mercy."⁹ The difference between pity and mercy is that the former is "the fault of an abject and base mind, cast down at the shew of anothers [sic] mishap," while the latter is "an inclination of the minde to succour the necessitie or miserie of another."¹⁰ Mercy is considered a virtue, while pity--though possibly "incident to man's nature"--is not considered "decent and right." Both Lipsius and Du Vair, though professed and quite possibly sincere

Christians, through their insistence on the rule of reason, bring to Christianity an austerity and harshness that is difficult to reconcile with the concept of the cross. As one critic of the Neostoics observes: "Le neo-stoicisme reste tout proche d'un Christianisme moyen, fait pour des gens raisonnables, pour des intellectuels, qui raisonnent tout, leur foi et les actes qu'elle leur dicte, mais qui n'auraient jamais la folie de la croix."¹¹ Thus it is the insistence on the rule of reason which placed the Stoic in opposition to the Epicurean or Libertine (these two terms were considered practically synonymous at the time)¹² on one hand, and the Christian on the other. Neither the Christian nor the Epicurean considered the total suppression of the passions possible, or even desirable, although both advocated temperance and moderation.

The generally accepted attitude toward the Epicurean, however, took little note of this advocacy of temperance and moderation. In spite of the publication of various "apologies" for Epicurus and his philosophy in the latter part of the seventeenth century,¹³ popular opinion tended to regard him and his followers as unmitigated sensualists. Thomas Creech's claim that "the Wantonness of the Epicurean is . . . notorious," and his description of Lucretius as a man "dissolved in Ease and Pleasure, flying publick employment. . . and avoiding those distractive Cares which he

imagined would make Heaven it self uneasy,"¹⁴ seem to be more in keeping with the image of the Epicure than Walter Charleton's evaluation of Epicurus as "a sublime Wit, a profound Judgment, and a great Master of Temperance, Sobriety, Contenance, Fortitude and all other Virtues."¹⁵

The misunderstanding and consequent condemnation of Epicurus and his followers may to some extent be based on the misinterpretation of his doctrine by some of these followers. John Evelyn seems to imply as much when he defends the hedonism of Epicurus as a refined hedonism and stresses the difference between Epicurus and "the empty and impatient Epicures of our age (unworthy that character)."¹⁶ Undoubtedly the fact that some of the most notorious rakes of the age professed themselves Libertines did not advance the cause of Epicureanism. Professor Underwood observes that the term libertine in its broadest sense implied "little more specific than a penchant for free thought and free inquiry--a general attitude of scepticism toward dogma as such."¹⁷ In the usage of the Restoration, however, the term had a much more specific and restricted meaning. In Love's Last Shift Amanda (in the guise of a new mistress) says to Loveless: "I own myself a Libertine, a mortal Foe to that dull Thing call'd Virtue, that mere Disease of sickly Nature. Pleasure's the End of Life."¹⁸ Her words, while possibly not a complete definition of Libertinism, seem to describe adequately the

popular notion of the Libertine. In proclaiming pleasure as the end of life, this type of Libertine follows Epicurus in precept, if not in practice. While Epicurus admitted physical pleasure, he assigned it a very minor role in the pursuit of the happy life. The Restoration Libertine, on the other hand, elevated pleasure of the senses to the predominant, if not the only, factor in the attainment of happiness. This total reliance on the senses led him to a rejection of reason, on one hand, and to scepticism concerning the certainty of any knowledge on the other. The Earl of Rochester's "Satyr against Reason and Mankind" is a typical expression of the libertine point of view. What men commonly call reason is totally rejected as an "ignis fatuus of the Mind." Yet, Rochester maintains, there is another kind of reason, right reason he calls it, which does serve a useful purpose in human conduct:

I own right Reason, which I would obey;
 That Reason, which distinguishes by Sense,
 And gives us Rules of Good and Ill from thence;
 That bounds Desires with a reforming Will
 To keep 'em more in vigour, not to kill:
 Your Reason hinders; mine helps to enjoy,
 Renewing Appetites yours would destroy:
 My Reason is my Friend, yours is a Cheat:
 Hunger calls out, my Reason bids me eat,
 Perversely yours, your Appetite does mock:
 This asks for Food, that answers, What's a-Clock?¹⁹

Obviously Rochester's "right Reason" is as foreign to the Stoic's reason as it is to that of the Christian. Yet in the rejection of reason as the guide of human behavior and

to human happiness, the Libertine and the Christian points of view approach each other, albeit for different reasons and with different conclusions. While the Libertine follows the demand of his natural inclinations--"Follow Nature" is almost the battle cry of the Restoration Libertine--the orthodox Christian cannot accept this alternative to the rule of reason, because nature is, after all, fallen nature.²⁰

Hence the Christian takes a stand between the Stoic and the Epicurean (as the seventeenth century saw them): he recognizes the need of curbing the passions by reason, but at the same time he recognizes the passions as a part of human nature and as possible instruments for virtue. Both St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine consider the passions as morally neutral per se: they become virtuous or vicious only as a result of the judgment of the will which directs them (Thomistic), or the quality of the love which inspires them (Augustinian). In the orthodox Christian view, "to suppress the passions instead of granting them a reasonable expression, is to deprive the rational powers of very valuable allies."²¹ Moreover, the Christian view holds that neither human reason nor human passions are efficacious means to the attainment of happiness or virtue. In the first place, perfect happiness or virtue in this world is beyond the reach of man; and, in the second, even such happiness or virtue as is within human reach is

unattainable by natural means alone, be they reason or the passions. The gift of divine grace (which is available to all who sincerely seek it) is necessary for the attainment of such limited happiness or virtue as human nature can ever hope to reach. Thus, for the Christian, Nature in its fallen state, inclined toward evil as a result of original sin, is an obstacle rather than a means to the pursuit of the good life.²² While the passions, as a part of fallen nature, may enforce man's sinful inclinations, they also may, if used properly, lend to the striving for virtue (which is synonymous with happiness) an ardor and impetus which reason alone could not provide.

As one of the seventeenth century writers concerned with the respective roles of reason and the passions observes: the Epicureans consider sensuality the only pleasure; the Stoics consider virtue the only happiness; but the Christians

allow of no felicity but Grace. The first submit the soul to the body, and reduce men to the life of beasts; the second fill the soul with arrogance, and in the misery of their condition, they imitate the pride of Devils; the last acknowledge their weakness, and finding by experience that Nature and Reason cannot deliver them, they implore aid from Grace, and undertake not to withstand Vices, nor to acquire Vertues, without Heaven's assistance.²³

The Christian, then, ultimately turns to a power outside of himself in order to achieve the good life, while the Stoic

and Epicurean rely exclusively on qualities inherent in man.

Any ideology advocating the suppression or curbing of any natural human qualities--and the Epicurean, the Stoic, and the Christian agree in considering the passions a part of human nature--is faced with the responsibility of pointing out to its followers the means of achieving this aim. In other words, the ideology has to provide its adherents with rules of conduct in regard to situations tending to arouse the passions to a degree beyond that considered reasonable and feasible. The Epicurean, ancient or seventeenth-century, did not show much concern for this problem. True, Epicurus advocated a reasonable use of the passions as the most successful means to the achievement of the good life. But while he himself practiced a rather strict austerity he did not condemn the indulgence of the passions per se. In fact, he states that "we must not violate nature but obey her; and we shall obey her if we fulfill the necessary desires and also the physical, if they bring no harm to us, but sternly reject the harmful."²⁴ It is easy to see how short a step it is from the point of view expressed here to that of the Restoration Libertine expressed in Rochester's poem quoted above.

The Stoic and the Christian, viewing the passions as a part of man's lower nature, could not ignore the question of temptation but had to offer their adherents a guide

to the subjection of the passions (albeit in a different degree) to the rule of reason. They agree on one point: it is wise to avoid temptations. The true Stoic sage is, it is true, above temptations: once having submitted completely to the rule of reason, he cannot be led astray, no matter how strong the provocation. Only few, however, reach this exalted state, and even these few reach it only gradually.²⁵ Thus until the ultimate goal of the Stoic is reached, he is in a very real danger of backsliding. Consequently it is prudent to avoid all occasions for such backsliding.

In the Christian view even the best are constantly in danger of relapsing. Even those in a state of grace need "to be continually in combat with dangerous temptations, . . . lest sin should bring our bodies to obey it; lest our members should be given up as weapons to sin; lest our eyes should follow our appetite; . . . lest our sight or our thought should stay too long upon a sinful delight; . . . lest our lust should become our law."²⁶ Thus one is constantly beset by temptations and called on to fight against them. Therefore it would be both foolish and presumptuous to seek out temptation. The instances in the Scriptures cautioning man to beware of temptation are too numerous to be cited; suffice it to point out "that Lead us not into Temptation, is a Petition in our Prayers, which was thought fit to be tackt to that for our daily Bread."²⁷

Recognition of the need to avoid temptation, shared

by the Christian and the Stoic, may well lead to speculations concerning the most favorable conditions for the preservation of one's virtue. Life in the relative seclusion of the country seems to have been regarded traditionally as more conducive to virtue than life in the city. The tradition which contrasts the innocence of country life to the corruption of city life was particularly alive and popular in England throughout the seventeenth century.²⁸ Its roots are to be found in classical antiquity, particularly in the Odes and Epodes of Horace, the Georgics of Virgil, the epigrams of Martial, and the satires of Juvenal. As Miss R  stvig points out, Horace's second Epode and the praise of the farmer in Virgil's Georgics II may be considered the loci classici of the ideal of rural retirement.²⁹

Not surprisingly the classical idea of the happiness to be found in country life underwent numerous modifications and alterations in its transfer from the Rome of Augustus to the England of the Stuarts.³⁰ To trace these changes would exceed the scope of this study as well as my abilities. For the purpose of an explication of The Relapse it is enough to sketch briefly the view of rural retirement generally held at Vanbrugh's time.³¹ The opinions on the merits and desirability of life in the country were by no means unanimous. There were those, among them Sir William Temple and Abraham Cowley, who praised the virtue and simplicity of country living. While their mode of living in the country was far

removed from the simple life of Horace's happy farmer, they viewed the relative solitude of the country as the proper setting for the pursuit of interests more in keeping with the nature of man than the empty pleasures, the ambitious race after wealth, fame, and preferment, which characterized life in the town. Horace's rustic had been transformed into an English gentleman, one who was capable of contemplating "on the nature of things," either alone or with likeminded friends, and to whom the country represented a state of almost prelapsarian bliss. The Epicurean elements, present in Horace's second Epode, but rather neglected by the early English translators, became more pronounced: in some instances, in fact (as in the poems of Mrs. Behn), the solitude of rural retirement was viewed as especially favorable for the indulgence in illicit sexual relationships. The changes in the character of the retired man were accompanied by changes in the scene of retirement: as Horace's farmer had become the retired gentleman, so the Sabine farm had become the garden--"Nature still, but Nature methodised."

There were, on the other hand, those who were only too happy to exchange their exile in the country (resulting from the political upheavals in the middle of the century) for the pleasures and diversions of the court. The wits surrounding Charles II viewed the country with dislike and contempt. The plays of the period suggest the view of the country held by the beau monde of the time: country people

are presented as either louts or fools; and a stay in the country is one of the worst experiences for the man--or woman--of fashion.³²

Country life, then, was in turns viewed as conducive to virtue, to the pursuit of the study of "the book of nature," to communion with the divine, and to the loss of one's manners and sensibility (if one ever had them). The country was consequently considered the seat of virtue and innocence, a haven from the cares and turmoils of the world, or the habitat of savages and bumpkins, the ultimate in boredom.

The conflicting views concerning the bliss or misery of country life, as well as the conflicting views concerning the respective roles of reason and the passions in human conduct all enter into The Relapse. Yet the play--even though it has been pronounced as approaching the "thesis play" by one of the most perceptive critics of Restoration comedy--is first and foremost a very witty and highly diverting comedy.³³ To take it apart, as is necessary in order to demonstrate the presence of the various elements discussed above, will to some degree destroy the comic aspects of the play. At the same time, an awareness on the part of the reader of the presence of all these conflicting views and elements may ultimately enhance the comedy of The Relapse and acquit its author of the charge that he had neither technique nor "clarity of thought", and that he failed in conveying a view of life, mainly because he did not have one.³⁴

In the opening scene of The Relapse, Loveless seems to assume the role of the Stoic sage. His first lines,

How true is that Philosophy, which says
Our Heaven is seated in our Minds,³⁵

imply that he is an adherent of "that Philosophy." While it is quite true that the stoic philosophy is by no means the only one to make the claim, Loveless appears to be referring to the stoic philosophy because his following discourse is primarily stoic in tenor. Even his opening lines echo the stoic (or neo-stoic) sentiments expressed by Du Vair and Lipsius. Du Vair, for instance, claims "that man should be wholly happie, if his minde enjoyeth his happiness,"³⁶ while Lipsius affirms that evils cannot be injurious "if they happen to light upon a constant settled mind."³⁷ In his further musings on his happy state, Loveless again seems to employ language suggestive of the stoic, even though epicurean elements slip into his discourse. Admittedly Loveless' boasts of having conquered envy and ambition, and of having reduced "the raging Flame of wild destructive Lust . . . to a warm pleasing Fire of lawful Love" (p. 19), could be made by the Christian as readily as by the Stoic. Either would count envy as one of the "band of these seditious passions, which so much trouble the quiet rest of our soule";³⁸ either would reject ambition, since it is indicative of a faulty judgment concerning the ultimate good; either would allow the "warm pleasing

Fire of a lawful Love," and the Stoic's warning against founding it on one's partner's youth or beauty, because "whereas this affection is founded and grounded upon such a slipperie and running thing, it is to bee feared least the heate thereof bee soon quenched,"³⁹ would meet with the Christian's approval. Yet Loveless' attitude appears stoic rather than Christian because of his complete reliance on the power of the mind. When Du Vair, in discussing the highest good (which, in his view, is virtue and depends on the will, i.e., the mind, only), claims that "a ruled and well-governed will never coveteth . . . but that which she may, and which it is in her power to procure, she busieth not her selfe about having that which it is not in her power to have when she will; as health, riches, and honor,"⁴⁰ he seems to place too much reliance on the independence of man's will (or mind). Loveless commits the same error, as he indicates when he assures Amanda of his unshakeable constancy, claiming that

'tis built upon a steady Basis--
 The Rock of Reason now supports my Love,
 On which it stands so fix'd,
 The rudest Hurricane of wild Desire
 Would, like the Breath of a soft slumbering Babe,
 Pass by, and never shake it (p. 20).

The image of the rock is a recurrent one in stoic writings. Extolling the supremacy of reason, Du Vair asserts that the man who has submitted to its rule is able to defy fortune "and remain as stable and unmovable as a rocke in the midst

of the sea."⁴¹ Thus in claiming the "Rock of Reason" as the foundation of his constancy, Loveless may suggest that he sees himself as the stoic sage. This view is further supported by Loveless' eagerness to expose himself to temptation in order to prove to Amanda that he is, indeed, beyond the danger of a relapse. This assurance on the part of Loveless may suggest that he considers himself as one who has come "in sight of wisdom." These are the ones who are "past the hazard of a Relapse, but they have still the grudgings of a Disease, though they are out of the Danger of it."⁴² This state represents the highest degree of wisdom attainable by man, according to Seneca. Loveless not only appears unaware of still having "the grudgings of a Disease," he also disregards the stoic advice to avoid temptation: according to the Stoic, even the virtuous man, in order to overcome his appetites, ought to "shun all Objects that may put them into his Head again, and remind him of them."⁴³

While all of these instances seem to indicate that Loveless believes himself to be a Stoic, they do not prove in any way that he really is a Stoic. Indeed, a good part of the comedy of The Relapse depends for its effect precisely on the discrepancy between what a man believes himself to be and what he really is. Thus Loveless' assumed Stoicism, when contrasted to his actions and true feelings, tends to make him a comic figure. From the very beginning of the play, Loveless' remarks indicate that his assumed

stoic self-sufficiency and detachment are not as firm and uncompromising as he would have Amanda believe (and as he himself believes). While he exalts his conquest of the passions, his content with Fortune, he dwells also on the physical pleasures of his retirement: his country house is his "little soft Retreat;" his thoughts are "unbent from all the Cares of Life"--cares which his subsequent statement (that he is "Eas'd from the grating Duties of Dependence") suggests to be of a rather mundane nature; moreover, he pronounces Amanda "the happy Cause of his Content" (pp. 19-20). Thus while Loveless may rest assured in his belief in his stoic strength of character, the reader may entertain some doubts concerning that strength. How much Loveless' content and happiness are still rooted in the physical--notwithstanding his claims to the contrary--is further implied by his speculations concerning the after-life:

When this aspiring Soul shall take its Flight,
And drop this pond'rous Clump of Clay behind it,
It may have Appetites we know not of,
And Pleasures as refin'd as its Desires. (p.10)

Since to the Stoic the conquest of his appetites and desires is a sine qua non in his pursuit of the virtuous life, Loveless' remark suggests his lack of self-knowledge. The heaven he visualizes would be less than heaven for the Stoic. Nor would Loveless' assertion that

The largest Boons that Heaven sees fit to grant
To Things it has decreed shall crawl on Earth
Are in the Gift of Women form'd like Amanda ,
(p. 20)

meet with the Stoic's approval.

While the Stoic would disagree with Loveless' statements because they suggest too great a dependence on external circumstances, Amanda is alarmed by his repeatedly expressed assurance of his unassailable virtue, his mastery of his fate.

In sharp contrast to Loveless' prideful assertions of superhuman achievements, Amanda continually asserts the precariousness of human virtue, the transitoriness of human life, and the frailty of human nature. While Loveless, in the mistaken belief that he has conquered completely and permanently the frailties of the flesh, seems to disregard the somber and frightening aspects of death in his contemplations of the soul's flight, Amanda stresses the narrow limits of human existence when she reminds him that

We are clad in black Mortality,
And the dark Curtain of Eternal Night
At last must drop between us. (p. 20)

Her words not only emphasize the inability of man to master his destiny in the face of inevitable death, but also--by their associations and connotations--recall the Christian tradition of mortality as a punishment for original sin. Moreover, since man's fall from paradise and the imposition of death upon him were the result of his pride, Loveless' display of pride suggests that he, too, will fall. Her awareness of human nature leads Amanda to oppose Loveless' eagerness to expose himself to temptation. She counters his assurance that "the Rock of Reason now supports his Love"

with the observation:

Yet still 'tis safer to avoid the Storm;
The strongest Vessels, if they put to Sea,
May possibly be lost.
Would I could keep you here, in this calm
Port, forever. (pp.20-21).

The image of the vessel in the storm employed by Amanda, although a common one, is rich in suggestions. On one hand it is frequently used by the Stoics (and Neo-stoics) to demonstrate the imperturbability of the soul of man under the rule of reason. Thus Du Vair, extolling moral strength under adverse conditions, expresses his opinion that "wee are to judge him to be the skilfuller pilot in a shippe, which can in a great tempest, amidst the raging flouds, guide an old sea-beaten ship full of holes, whose sayles are rent, and ropes broken."⁴⁴ And Lipsius, propounding the blessings of constancy says:

She will comfort thee and bring thee
backe from the pits brinke: onely take
unto thee a good courage, steere thy
ship into this porte, where is securitie
and quietnesse, a refuge and sanctuarie
against all turmoyles and troubles:
where if thou hast once mored thy ship. . .
thou shalt remain unmoved: let showres,
thunders, lighteninges, and tempestes fall
round about thee, thou shalt crie boldlie
with a loude voyce, I lie at rest amid the
waves.⁴⁵

On the other hand the image of the storm-tossed ship is emblematic of the temptations and struggles encountered by man on his life's journey. In addition, the image may also suggest the danger inherent in man's attempt to leave

his natural element in order to follow the call of adventure or of fame and fortune.⁴⁶

The term "vessel" in the image seems to add to its suggestions, particularly in view of Amanda's line immediately following: "Forgive the Weakness of a Woman." "Vessel" in close proximity with "Weakness" and "Woman" may recall St. Peter's exhortation to husbands to give "honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel" (I Peter 3:7).⁴⁷ Viewed in this light the image adds a dimension of dramatic irony to the exchange between Amanda and Loveless. Her weakness is her strength because it leads her to a recognition of the dangers of temptations, while Loveless--who shares in the general weakness of human nature--is weakest where he believes himself to be strongest: in his ability to withstand temptation. Moreover, Loveless' greater weakness, resulting from his mistakenly assumed strength, may suggest a certain disorder in his relationship to Amanda: if everything were as it should be, he ought to be the stronger and wiser and she "the weaker vessel."

In their insistence on the frailty of human nature and the precarious state of human virtue, Amanda's words indicate her realistic view of human nature. At the same time they also serve as an ironic comment on the common failure of man to recognize his own shortcomings: while Amanda very clearly recognizes Loveless' error of putting too much trust in his virtue, she completely fails to see

later in the play that she, too, is subject to temptation and that her virtue may, indeed, be in danger.

The basic fallacy in Loveless' reasoning--and the one which escapes Amanda's notice and to which she later falls victim herself--is his failure to realize that he finds himself in the rare and fortunate situation where inclination and obligation coincide. He is virtuous for the time being, because he has everything he desires and has not yet encountered a temptation which would create a conflict between his duty and his desires. The same is true for Amanda, a fact to which Berinthia alludes later in the play, when she says of Amanda: "I think 'tis a presumptuous Thing in a Woman to assume the name of Vertuous, till she has heartily hated her Husband, and been soundly in Love with somebody else" (p. 55). It is equally presumptuous for Loveless to assume the name of virtuous only because he happens to be satisfied with things as they are.

Thus the opening scene between Loveless and Amanda sets up the contrast between the former's pride and self-confidence (the stoic view), and the latter's awareness of the frailty of human nature and the insufficiency of human reason (the Christian view). While the scene points out the risks involved in deliberately seeking out temptation, it also implies the dangers involved in putting too much trust in an untried virtue. Both Amanda and Loveless find

themselves at the opening of the play in what is imaged as an almost prelapsarian state of bliss; but they live in a postlapsarian world and will be only able to reach valid conclusions concerning their virtue when they meet a situation in which their desires and their obligations come into conflict. Given their postlapsarian world, this confrontation is inevitable. But even if they pass the test of this confrontation successfully, this fact will not justify their drawing any valid conclusions as to their behavior in future confrontations. Virtue--like sin--depends ultimately on action, and it is outside the ken of human nature to predict such action accurately, hence the "open end" of The Relapse which has been frequently branded a weakness by critics.⁴⁸

In view of Vanbrugh's stated purpose in The Relapse such criticism appears unjustified. The whole problem of the play is centered on the view of virtue as an experiential action. Amanda's and Loveless' theories concerning their virtue can be put into practice only when they experience a conflict between their inclinations and obligations. At the opening of the play, "the Fiery-Trial" of their virtue is yet to come. Loveless is certain of victory, and Amanda is equally certain that she could not even be tempted, because they are satisfied with the status quo.

In contrast to Amanda and Loveless, Young Fashion has no reason to be satisfied with things as they are. His situation is desperate; in fact, it is quite similar to

Loveless' situation at the beginning of Love's Last Shift. Both have run through their inheritance; both have returned from abroad penniless; and both are forced to cast about for some means of repairing their fortunes. Unlike the Loveless of Love's Last Shift, however, Young Fashion is not opportunely provided with a solution which not only solves his financial difficulties, but also allows him to abandon his libertine ways and to embrace virtue joyfully. Young Fashion's first scene with Lory and the Waterman establishes his financial need and also reveals a great deal about his character and his attitudes. That he has good nature and some sense of obligation is indicated by his assuming the responsibility for Lory's keep, whom he assures: "Yes, Sirrah, I have my self and you to take care of still" (p. 24). His quick solution of the problem of paying the Waterman implies that he has experience in handling such situations and that, moreover, he will not refrain from a little cheat if the exigencies require it. This impression is enhanced by Young Fashion's assertion that being a Jacobite would no more prevent him from taking the Oath in order to enter the army than his being an atheist would prevent him from taking orders (p. 24). By opposing "the strength of the Conscience" to "the weakness of the Purse," Young Fashion implies that he is aware of conflicting demands in the life of man. He does not, however, make any claims that in such a conflict the demands of conscience would win over

those of his necessities. By his own confession, he is "a young Rake-hell, that has plaid many a Roguish trick" (p. 31). Yet when Coupler offers him an opportunity to mend his finances and take revenge on Lord Foppington, whose indifference to his difficulties has angered Young Fashion, the latter hesitates to put Coupler's plan into action. As he tells Lory, "This is so full grown a cheat, I find I must take pains to come up to't; I have Scruples" (p. 31).

Nevertheless, Young Fashion is too aware of the pressing demands of his necessities to allow his "Conscience to starve him," but he does resolve to make "one conclusive Trial of Lord Foppington." If Lord Foppington is willing to assist young Fashion, he will abandon his plan and accept even "a modest aid." This resolution gives the self-confessed Libertine, Young Fashion, a morally superior position to the would-be Stoic Loveless: the former does not nearly as readily cheat his brother in the interest of his necessities as the latter cheats his wife in the interest of his pleasure. While Young Fashion is willing to give Lord Foppington a chance to prove himself generous, he is prepared to "subdue his Conscience to his Plot" if Lord Foppington fails the test. Lord Foppington having refused to assist him, Young Fashion kicks conscience down stairs and pursues Coupler's plan without any further scruples. Young Fashion's libertine attitudes are clearly displayed

in his dealings with Hoyden, Sir Tunbelly, and their retinue. He never leaves any doubt that he is interested in acquiring Hoyden's money and not her person. His pretended ardor serves only the purpose of getting Sir Tunbelly's--and, failing this, Hoyden's--consent to a speedy marriage. He has no illusion about Hoyden's character, of whom he observes: "This is a rare Girl, I'faith; I shall have a fine time on't with her in London; . . . But no matter, she brings an Estate will afford me a separate Maintenance" (p. 63). He is fully aware of the greed motivating Nurse and Bull and employs it to his purpose. Yet he seems not entirely insincere when he tells Nurse: "I did deceive you and your young Lady, 'tis true, but I always design'd to make a very good Husband to her, and to be a very good Friend to you. And 'tis possible in the end, she might have found her self happier, and you richer, than ever my Brother will make you" (p. 87). Young Fashion does not make any promises; he only points out the obvious advantages a marriage to him would have to Hoyden and Nurse. His skepticism never changes, although he allows in the end, when he is reunited with Hoyden, that "now perhaps the Bargain be-tween himself and Hoyden7 is struck for Life" (p. 100).

In his skeptical attitude toward human nature, in his refusal to accept traditional views, in his insistence on giving necessity precedence over conscience, Young Fashion presents the libertine view. His is, however, an entirely

different libertinism from that of Berinthia and Worthy on one hand, and of Lord Poppington on the other. Young Fashion may not be the most admirable character, but he is one that is most understandable. In his case the conflict between necessity and conscience is presented in an experiential situation, and the implication is that most often necessity will win over conscience.⁴⁹ The very fact that Young Fashion is aware of the conflict, however, sets him apart from the other libertines in the play.

Berinthia and Worthy are Libertines of the same kind, notwithstanding the fact of Worthy's conversion in Act V. Worthy resembles most closely the libertine of earlier Restoration comedy. Berinthia's description of his character (which is apparently accurate) marks him as a man of sense who manipulates his affairs with a dexterity and discretion worthy of Etherege's Dorimant. According to Berinthia, "Men that may be call'd the Beaux Antipathy" and of whom Worthy is the pattern, "have Brains, . . . are in love with their Mistress, . . . take care of her Reputation, . . . are decent, . . . are sound, . . . and, are Men" (p. 43). Moreover, she compares Worthy to "a Back-stair Minister at Court, who, whilst the reputed Favourites are sauntering in the Bed-chamber, is ruling the Roast in the Closet" (p. 43). Worthy's actions confirm the correctness of Berinthia's estimate of him, if one considers her language in the light of her character. Considering that, being decent

probably lies in exercising a certain discretion in carrying on one's affairs; and the "love" she talks of may well be what Worthy himself later terms "the vile, the gross desires of Flesh and Blood" (p. 93). Worthy himself proclaims himself a libertine in word and deed up to the conversion scene. On discovering Berinthia and Loveless in the garden (III, ii), he instantly determines to put his knowledge of their relationship to good use: "This discovery is a lucky one, I hope to make a happy use on't," he says (in an aside). "That Gentlewoman there is no Fool; so I shall be able to make her understand her Interest" (p. 53). This statement may also to some degree justify Berinthia's later rationalization that she had to agree to serve as Worthy's bawd because he might have ruined her if she had refused him. As for Berinthia's assertion that men like Worthy are in love with their mistresses, Worthy himself quite clearly indicates the character of that love. Having received Berinthia's admission of her interest in Loveless, he tells her: "Now am I almost in love with you again. Nay, I don't know but I might be quite so, had I made one short campaign with Amanda. Therefore, if you find 'twou'd tickle your Vanity, to bring me down once more to your Lure, e'en help me quickly to dispatch her business, that I may have nothing else to do, but apply myself to yours" (p. 54). Worthy's object is quite obviously pleasure, the satisfaction of his

appetites, and he pursues it without scruples. In view of his intention of seducing Amanda, his thoughtfulness in delivering himself the message of Loveless' staying out late takes on a rather selfish appearance. His musings on the advantages of employing "a young Bawd, and a handsome one," and his resolution never to employ an old hag, imply that he is by no means finished with pursuing illicit affairs, that having had "a short Campaign" with Amanda, he will seek pleasure elsewhere. Worthy's eager acceptance of Berinthia's plan that he seek out Amanda at a critical moment (just after she has received irrefutable proof of Loveless' infidelity) further supports the libertine aspects of his character. Even in the much discussed and much attacked conversion scene, Worthy, in spite of his promises of a "softer Usage" of Amanda's heart, in spite of his assertion that, could she but see his, she would find it "sound," has still one aim only: the seduction of Amanda. His use of the language of the précieux does not indicate a change in his attitude. Even after his conversion, he remains enough the skeptic to wonder "how long this influence [Of Amanda's virtue] will last." (p. 93).⁵⁰ For the better part of The Relapse, then, Worthy's attitude is that of the libertine and the skeptic.

That Berinthia, too, belongs to the libertine camp is clearly revealed by her dealings with Loveless and Worthy. But, being a woman of sense, she succeeds in keeping up the appearance of a woman of virtue with Amanda. Her words to Amanda often reveal strongly libertine tendencies, but

Berinthia removes them into the realm of fiction by asserting that she is merely talking "madly," but is, in truth, "very innocent." Amanda is apparently completely convinced of Berinthia's innocence, but the audience is not deceived even before Berinthia's private encounters with Loveless and Worthy. After Amanda's remark about how marriage and widowhood have improved Berinthia, the latter states in an aside: "Alack a day, there has gone more than that to improve me, if she knew all" (p. 44). In her first private encounter with Loveless, Berinthia completely drops the mask of innocence when she implies that she might well be able and willing to give him ease from his "distemper." Her libertine attitude is further affirmed by her ready consent to assist Worthy in the seduction of Amanda. Worthy's assertion that to engage Amanda "in the Intrigue of her own" will draw attention and suspicion away from Berinthia and give her a free hand in conducting her affair with Loveless appears to be more an inducement to assist him than her fear of exposure if she refused him. Berinthia herself indicates this attitude when she expresses a certain pleasure at the thought of "carrying on another Bodies Intrigue . . . /because/ it exercises almost all the entertaining Faculties of a Woman. For there's employment for Hypocrisie, Invention, Deceit, Flattery, Mischief, and Lying" (p. 55). Once she has accepted her role as "bawd," Berinthia is more inventive than Worthy in arranging for him advantageous situations with Amanda. It is

she who urges him to catch Amanda at a critical moment, when she will be most likely to comply with his advances.

Berinthia also is determined almost from the first to have an affair with Loveless. After having discussed with him the symptoms of his "distemper" (III, ii), she states: "This Man has bewitch'd me, that's certain. Well, I am condemn'd. . . . Well, I never had but one Intrigue yet: But I confess I long to have another. Pray Heaven it end as the first did tho', that we may both grow weary at a time; for 'tis a Melancholy thing for Lovers to outlive one another" (p.53). Berinthia does not make an attempt to pretend (even to herself) that Loveless' attraction is anything but a purely physical one. She longs to have another affair, and he seems a most suitable partner for one. No thought of any obligation to Amanda as her friend and hostess ever enters her mind. To her, as to Worthy (and Loveless after he first sees her), pleasure is the end of life, and she pursues it without scruples.

Lord Foppington also views pleasure as the end of life and is in this respect a Libertine. But his is a different kind of libertinism from that of Worthy and Berinthia (and Loveless in the latter part of the play). Theirs is mostly concerned with the satisfaction of sexual desires, while his pays little heed to these. He wants the reputation, rather than the life, of a rake. In describing the

course of his daily life, which he pronounces to be "a perpetual stream of Pleasure, that glides through such a Variety of Entertainments . . . [as] the wisest of our Ancestors never had the least Conception of 'em" (p. 37), he completely omits any reference to amorous exploits. He dwells on the pleasure of food, drink, dress, polite society, even sleep, but not once mentions women. One might argue that Lord Foppington is too discreet to talk about his affairs, if it were not for his readiness to discuss them when specifically asked about them by Amanda. But one gets the impression that his so-called "amours"--if they exist at all--occupy little of his time or thought, and his reply to Amanda's inquiry implies that much: "As to time for my Intrigues," he says, "I usually make Detachments of it from my other Pleasures, according to Exigency" (p. 37). Lord Foppington proves by his own words that he is more interested in the size of a periwig, the placement of a pocket, than he is in his amours, and that his heart is indeed always "a la glace." His type of Libertinism does not require him to "follow nature"; in fact, he is so completely artificial that one suspects that even "the vile, the gross desires of flesh and blood" are too natural to suit his taste.

The degree to which Lord Foppington has abandoned almost all natural instincts, except that of self-love, is also manifested in his indifference to all others. His

refusal to assist Young Fashion appears to result from an almost inhuman ignorance of any moral obligation rather than from ill will. The explanation he offers for his refusal--that he is "reduc'd to that Extremity in /his/ Cash, /he has/ been forc'd to retrench in that one Article of sweet Powder, till /he/ braught it down to Five Guineas a Month" (p. 48)--apparently is as reasonable to him, as is his reason for his attempt to debauch Amanda: that "she was a Woman of an Insolent Vertue" (p. 47). He seems to see nothing reprehensible in his admission that his Heart "cut a Caper up to /his/ Mouth . . . when /he/ heard /his/ Father was shat thro the Head" (p. 47); nor does he seem to doubt that Young Fashion entertained the same feelings concerning his own possible death from the wound inflicted by Loveless. In spite of his artificiality and "refined" tastes, Lord Foppington operates on an almost sub-human level: he is in no danger of being tempted, because that would presuppose a recognition of a moral norm of whose existence he is totally unaware. Lord Foppington's failure to be even aware of a moral norm renders him amoral rather than immoral. But his amorality is, in some way, the source of his happiness because it frees him from all cares and disturbances.

None of the characters discussed above ought to be viewed as personified abstractions, as no more than an ideology clothed in human form. They are, most of all, representations of human beings. And while ideologies tend to set up

norms, human beings tend to deviate from norms. That they frequently misinterpret the ideologies whose adherents they believe themselves to be, and equally frequently misunderstand their own human nature, seems merely to prove in another way the frailty of mankind, the theme of The Relapse.

Just as The Relapse attacks some misconceptions concerning human nature and the efficacy of certain ideologies for the pursuit of the good life, so it also casts doubt on the widely (though by no means unanimously) held notion of the country as the seat of innocence and virtue. Vanbrugh, it is true, claims to have moved Amanda and Loveless into the country when he decided to take up their story because, as he says, "I saw but one danger in Solitude and Retirement, and I saw a thousand in the bustle of the World."⁵² If one could be sure that Vanbrugh is entirely serious in the Short Vindication, one would have to believe that he shared the view of country life as being conducive to virtue. He is, however, answering Collier's attack, and the whole tone of the Short View is frequently one of ironic banter. Consequently his statement must be taken with a grain of salt, particularly in view of the fact that The Relapse appears to fail to support his statement of the safety of the country.

The country seat of Amanda and Loveless in Act I is, indeed, presented as approaching the earthly paradise.

It is also true that Amanda and Loveless are content and free from disturbances and temptations as long as they remain there. But while Loveless is tempted--and falls-- in town, Amanda, also tempted, not only overcomes temptation but also causes Worthy to rise above the desires of the flesh, in town. Thus virtue is possible in either place. Moreover, this is not the only aspect of The Relapse to cast doubt on the moral advantages of country living.

The more compelling reason is the introduction of Sir Tunbelly's country menage. Certainly the country inhabited by Sir Tunbelly and Hoyden, Nurse and Bull, is far removed from paradise. It is, rather, the country of the barnyard, as is indicated by the constant use of animal imagery in connection with Hoyden. On first seeing Sir Tunbelly's house, Young Fashion compares it to Noah's Ark, "design'd for the Fowls of the Air and the Beasts of the Field." Lory's fear that it "will prove some Inchanterd Castle" from which a "Gyant" might emerge and attack them (p. 57) sets up a contrast between the castles of romance, with their ogres guarding maidens in distress, and "Turmas" with his blunderbus, guarding Hoyden, who is apparently locked up to keep her from following the example of "the young Greyhound Bitch" (p. 59). The country of Sir Tunbelly's seat is anything but a source of content to Hoyden, apparently no inducement of virtue for Nurse and Bull, no refining influence on Sir Tunbelly.

A more glaring contrast than that between Loveless' country house and Sir Tunbelly's estate can hardly be imagined. The juxtaposition of the idealized scene of the former and the rustic primitivism of the latter appears to destroy the idea of virtue and innocence--or the lack of it--being dependent on geographic location. The town need not be a place of debauchery, as Amanda proves, nor the country one of purity and innocence, as Nurse, Bull, and Hoyden demonstrate.

The Relapse, then, attacks some notions concerning human behavior. It does not, however, offer a pat and ready solution to the problem confronting man, thanks to his dual nature, his "middle state." The one point that the play stresses is that neither environment nor the "rule of reason" are decisive factors. Ultimately man's actions depend on his individual choice, but even when he knows which way he ought to choose, he is often swayed by self-love, appetites, or simply blindness, to make the wrong choice. Loveless deliberately chooses to violate his obligations for the satisfaction of his appetite; Young Fashion, equally deliberately but more justifiably, chooses to consider his necessities first and to kick conscience down stairs. Amanda, on the other hand, though sorely tempted, chooses to remain true to her principles and to deny herself the fulfillment of her inclination. Worthy's choice in the matter is somewhat more limited since it is, to some extent, contingent on Amanda's.

He can, and does, however, choose to submit to her conditions and in doing so rises above the demands of appetites.

Lord Foppington and Berinthia are the only major characters in the play who escape unscathed. Yet not even the most naive audience would assume this fact to imply that stupidity and foppishness, complete self-centeredness and disregard of obligations, assure happiness. Both Berinthia and Lord Foppington are too shallow, too much living on the surface, to be aware of any conflict. Thus they escape unhappiness, but are at the same time excluded from happiness. Their attitude leaves, however, room for pleasure which is, after all, all they want.

The way in which the problem of The Relapse is posed implies its possible solution. The solution presupposes a recognition of the fact that to be human means to be subject to error, to be torn between conflicting demands, to be constantly faced with choices, and to be ever unable to predict one's actions.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER II

- ¹Restoration Comedy, p. 152.
- ²Henry W. Sams, "Anti-Stoicism in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth Century England," SP, XLIX (1944), 65-78.
- ³Ibid., p. 66.
- ⁴The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks, Englished by Thomas James, Rudolf Kirk, ed. (New Brunswick, N. J., 1951), p. 45.
- ⁵Lipsius, for instance, denies the stoic idea that even God is subservient to the law of destiny. Du Vair, although not as explicit in his rejection of the Stoic's "Fortune," takes the same stand.
- ⁶Du Vair, Moral Philosophie, p. 62. See also Justus Lipsius, Two Bookes of Constancie, Englished by Sir John Stradling, Rudolf Kirk, ed. (New Brunswick, N. J., 1939), p. 77: "rather change your owne mind wrongfully subjected to affections and withdrawne from the naturall obedience of his lawful Ladie, I mean REASON."
- ⁷Moral Philosophie, p. 90.
- ⁸Ibid., p. 12.
- ⁹Of Constancie, p. 53.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 99.
- ¹¹Leontine Zanta, La Renaissance du Stoicism au XVI^e Siècle (Paris, 1914), p. 335.
- ¹²Underwood, Etherege, p. 11, note 5.
- ¹³The most important "apologies" for Epicurus are: Walter Charleton, Epicurus' Morals: Collected and Faithfully Englished (London, 1665); John Evelyn, An Essay on the First Book of T. Lucretius Carus De Rerum Natura (London, 1656); Sir William Temple, "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus," in Miscellaniae the Second Part (London, 1692). All of these present Epicurus as a man of virtue and moderation whose hedonism was frequently misunderstood by his enemies as well as his followers.

¹⁴Titus Lucretius Carus His Six Books of Epicurean Philosophy: Done into English Verse with Notes, third edition (London, 1683). "Notes," p. 1 and "Life," A 2 v; see also Du Vair, Moral Philosophy, p. 47.

¹⁵Epicurus' Morals, "An Apology for Epicurus," no pagination, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶An Essay on the First Book of Lucretius, p. 110.

¹⁷Etherege, p. 10.

¹⁸Love's Last Shift, IV (p. 66).

¹⁹Selected Lyrics and Satires of John Wilmot 2nd Earl of Rochester, Donald Duncan, ed. (London, 1948), p. 76.

²⁰For the use of the term Nature see Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore, 1935), Appendix (pp. 447-456), particularly 31 (p. 450) and 50 (p. 453) for the Stoics; 57, 59 and 65 (pp. 454 and 456) for the Epicureans.

²¹Richard R. Baker, The Thomistic View of the Passions and Their Influence Upon the Will (Notre Dame, 1941), p. 139. It may be noted here that Calvin, in The Institutes of the Christian Faith, condemns "all human desires /as/ evil" (Book III, Chapt. iii, Sect. 12). While on the other hand Thomas Wright, in The Passions of the Minde in Generall (London, 1621), and J. F. Senault in The Use of the Passions, the Earl of Monmouth, trans. (London, 1671), regard the passions as instruments of virtue. The latter claims that "vertue herself would become useless, had she no passions either to subdue or regulate" (p. 7).

²²Cf. Lovejoy and Boas, Primitivism, Appendix, 34 (p. 451).

²³Senault, The Use of the Passions, (3 c, r and v).

²⁴The Extant Remains of Epicurus, C. Bailey, ed. (Oxford, 1926), p. 41.

²⁵Roger L'Estrange, Seneca's Morals by Way of Abstract (London, 1682), p. 127.

²⁶St. Augustine, The City of God, XXII, xxiii (Everyman ed. II. 390-91).

²⁷Vanbrugh, A Short Vindication, Works, I, 210.

²⁸The development of this classical idea is traced extensively and admirably in Maren Sofie Røstvig's The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal, 2 vols, Oslo Studies in English No. 2 (1954), and No. 8 (1958). All subsequent references to Miss Røstvig's study are to vol. I, revised second edition (New York, 1962).

²⁹The Happy Man, p. 41.

³⁰It reached the continent as early as the sixteenth century, but, as Miss Røstvig states, "literary fashions in England lagged behind those of the Continent" (p. 13).

³¹The following discussion is based on Miss Røstvig's study, particularly chapters I and V.

³²Cf. for instance Dorimant's and Harriet's comments on country life in Etherege's Man of Mode (V, ii); the "wits'" estimate of Sir Wilfull in Congreve's The Way of The World.

³³Underwood, Etherege, p. 49.

³⁴Dobree, "Introduction" to Works, I, xxv.

³⁵Works, I, 19. All subsequent references to The Relapse, appearing in the text, are to this edition.

³⁶Moral Philosophie, p. 59 (my italics).

³⁷Of Constancy, p. 180. See also Roger L'Estrange, Seneca's Morals by Way of Abstract (London, 1682), pp. 119, 255.

³⁸Du Vair, Moral Philosophie, p. 65.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 116-17.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 58. See also p. 80.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 67.

⁴²L'Estrange, Seneca's Morals, p. 127.

⁴³Ibid., p. 191.

⁴⁴Moral Philosophie, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁵Of Constancy, p. 84.

⁴⁶An emblematic picture by Otto van Veen, illustrating Horace's second Epode, shows a storm-tossed ship in the background, while the foreground is occupied by a farmer at work in the field. Many poems praising the "golden age" also specifically include the sailing of ships as one of the innovations that disrupted man's happiness.

⁴⁷One may argue that "vessel" fits the meter, while "ship" does not. However, the verb could easily have been changed to fit the meter, had "ship" been used.

⁴⁸For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Chapter III below.

⁴⁹That this conclusion is not necessarily true is, of course, later demonstrated by Amanda.

⁵⁰For a detailed discussion of the conversion scene see Chapter III below.

⁵¹A Short Vindication, Works, I, 213.

CHAPTER III

THE MEANING OF THE RELAPSE

i

The very qualities that make The Relapse a good play are also the ones that offer the greatest difficulties to an explication of the play: the movement of gentlemen and fools, country squires and ladies, between the country and the town; piling up of images fraught with allusion, inversion, and allegorical significance; the language which is at the same time religious and bawdy, philosophical and mundane, allegorical and realistic. All of these combine to leave the reader with a first impression of near-chaos. Yet a close study of the play reveals that appearances are, indeed, often deceptive and that the near-chaos is carefully ordered, with every word and every movement pointing to the central action: "the fall of man . . . through the defects of his nature."¹

The fall of man with which The Relapse is concerned is the repeated fall in historical time, sin. And sin, no matter how relatively minor, is both the consequence and the re-enactment of the original fall of man which led to the loss of paradise. That original fall forms a backdrop for the action of The Relapse, a backdrop which is

established by the movement of the play from a state of relative innocence, through experience and temptation, to choice and final judgment, and by repeated verbal echoes from the great epic of the fall of man, Paradise Lost.

At the opening of The Relapse Loveless and Amanda find themselves in a state of content and happiness which suggests almost prelapsarian bliss: both claim that they wish for nothing but the continuation of their present state. But Loveless' opening lines, claiming that "our Heav'n is seated in Minds," imply that his happy state is based on a faulty premise. While man's state of mind doubtlessly has some bearing on his attainment of heaven, the Christian heaven is transcendent as well as immanent and thus exists independently from man's mind. Loveless' statement, strongly suggesting the supremacy of the mind, not only seems to invert the divine order of things according to which it is man who is dependent on heaven, not heaven on man, but it also suggests that Loveless may be falling into the error of Satan, who expressed his claim for the supremacy of the mind in terms similar to those employed by Loveless:

The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
(PL, I, 254-55)

Satan soon learned the error of his statement--"Which way I flie is Hell, my self am Hell" (PL, IV, 75)--and so does Loveless. Yet even in his first speech one perceives that

the "Heaven" he enjoys in his "little soft Retreat" is less a result of his state of mind than of a combination of fortunate external circumstances.

Loveless' reasoning then appears faulty from the beginning, and since his whole argument concerning the unassailability of his virtue is based on the false premise of heaven in the mind, his fall is prepared for from the start. Moreover, Amanda's sober reminder of man's "black Mortality" serves to emphasize man's fallen state and hence to bring into relief the presumptuousness of Loveless' claim. Yet in spite of this reminder and the reader's awareness of Loveless' mistake in believing himself in paradise, Loveless' life at his country house gives the illusion of at least approaching perfection.

As the scene shifts from "Solitude and Retirement" to "the bustle of the World," the vast gulf that separates postlapsarian man from a state of innocence becomes more and more apparent. The world of Young Fashion and Lord Foppington, Berinthia and Worthy, Sir Tunbelly and Hoyden, leaves no doubt that it is a corrupted world, ruled by want and deceit, by debauchery and callous unconcern for others, by greed for wealth and desire for sensuous pleasures. It is a world of cares, and intrigues, and empty luxuries.

One of the most striking differences between the world of Amanda's and Loveless' retirement and that of the remainder of the play is the quality of motion and restlessness that permeates the latter. While the reader is given

only a brief glance at Amanda's and Loveless' country life (Act I, i), he still perceives a quality of restfulness that pervades the scene. In fact, this quality is one of the features of the scene which suggests the almost paradisiacal character of Loveless' country house. Another is the presence of only two persons, Amanda and Loveless, in the scene. One may assume that there are servants, but none of them enters the scene or the conversation between Amanda and Loveless. Thus the physical setting of the scene suggests a paradise; a man and a woman in a garden.² As soon as Loveless' country house is left behind, an element of restlessness enters into the play. This change in the atmosphere of the play may be partly caused by the number of people crowding on and off the stage in the following scenes; partly by the change in the physical setting; and to a considerable degree by the change in the tone and the topics of conversation.

In Act I, ii, three people appear: Young Fashion, Lory, and the Waterman. The setting of the scene is Whitehall, a busy place. But the most remarkable difference between this scene and the preceding one lies in the change of conversation. Amanda's and Loveless' exchange in Act I, i moves on a predominantly philosophical level: they are concerned with problems pertaining to the conduct of life, with theories. In contrast, Young Fashion, Lory, and the

Waterman are concerned with the practices and necessities of the world. The Waterman asserts that "these are nimble times. There are a great many Sharpers stirring" (p. 23). This statement introduces the problem of man's conduct toward his fellowmen. Young Fashion's consideration of the Army as a means of mending his finances and Lory's objection to that plan on account of Young Fashion's being a Jacobite, suggest warfare and the strife between factions. All of these problems are characteristic of a fallen world and enter in some form into The Relapse, even though the warfare does not involve armies: it is partly a war of wits between men, and partly a psychomachia within man.

The scene of Lord Foppington's levee, presenting the empty pleasures and luxuries of the town, is crowded with people and activity. Yet all the hustle and bustle of the tradesmen, employing all their skill to create a beau, falls short of their goal. For all their combined efforts, Lord Foppington gets a Steenkirk with which he is "in love"; but he also gets a coat which he refuses to wear, shoes that "pinch him/execrably," hose that make his "legs look like a Chairman's," and a periwig that makes him resemble "the full Moon." The whole scene with its wasted efforts, its motion without moving anywhere, is almost emblematic of the futility of the type of life led by Lord Foppington and other people of quality. In spite of his frantic pursuit

of pleasure which induces him to fill every hour of the day with activity, to consider quiet unbearable because " 'tis impossible to be quiet, without thinking: Now thinking is . . . the greatest Fatigue in the World," Lord Fofpington also never gets anywhere, but remains at a standstill while running about. Yet to him this frantic, fruitless activity is one of the aspects of his life which leads him to pronounce it "an eternal raund CofDelight" (p. 37).

Shortly after their own arrival in town, Loveless and Amanda are caught in the restlessness typical of the other characters. Their change in attitude is indicated by their feverish activity. Only once after their leaving the country are Loveless and Amanda seen alone together. Even then (Act II, i) their conversation, although in some respects a continuation of their earlier exchange in the country, shows some signs that the corrupting influence of town has already affected Loveless. He tells Amanda of his "most harmless Entertainment" at the theater, consisting in "admiring the workmanship of Nature in the Face of a young Lady." This remark, besides indicating Loveless' beginning corruption, also may suggest that even after having taken his first step toward his relapse he still is resorting to the language of the Stoic. His words echo almost verbatim Du Vair's, who, having warned his reader against falling victim to that "mad and frantic passion"

which results from desiring a beautiful object, advises that we "order our mindes in such sort, that in considering the excellencie of beautie, we do acknowledge the cunning workmanship of nature."³ Loveless, at this stage, seems fully aware that he is merely trying to allay Amanda's suspicions, as he explicitly states in an aside, following Amanda's remonstrances that his admiration of the young lady was not as disinterested as he would have her believe. "She has Reason on her side," he says. "I have talk'd too much: But I must turn it off another way" (p. 34).

With the arrival of Berinthia, Lord Foppington, and Worthy on the scene, the once quiet household of Amanda and Loveless becomes a scene of confusion. Berinthia's appearance accelerates Loveless' movement toward his fall; Lord Foppington's impertinent attempt to debauch Amanda leads to his fight with Loveless and all the ensuing commotion: the screaming of the women, the arrival of the surgeon, the call for chairmen. Amanda's reaction to Lord Foppington's proposition appears somewhat too violent: that she is indignant is understandable, but to resort to a slap in the face seems too drastic a measure for a woman of the world. Her impassioned plea for Loveless' forgiveness suggests that she is aware of a breach of good taste, but it also offers a sharp contrast to the casual attitude Loveless and Worthy display. Loveless tells Worthy in answer to his

inquiry concerning the "wounded Peer": "O a Trifle; He wou'd have lain with my Wife before my Face, so she oblig'd him with a Box o'the Ear, and I run him thro' the Body: That was all." Worthy's comment matches Loveless' tone: "Bagatelle on all sides" (p. 41). While it is perfectly reasonable to view Lord Foppington's attempt on Amanda's virtue as ridiculous, Loveless' passing it off as a trifle (even though he fought Lord Foppington before) indicates a change from his former high seriousness.

Henceforward a great many scenes are taken up with plotting and consequently involve a certain amount of secrecy. Loveless' discussion with Berinthia in the garden (Act III,ii) amounts to a tacit plot, as is suggested by their understanding to keep Loveless' "distemper" a secret from Amanda. Berinthia enters into a plot with Worthy to help him "to a short Campaign with Amanda." Young Fashion and Lory arrive at Sir Tunbelly's house to carry out Coupler's plot and, while there, enter into a plot with Hoyden and Nurse to arrange a secret marriage between Young Fashion and Hoyden. Back in town Young Fashion, having learned of Hoyden's marriage to his brother, works out another plot with Coupler to secure himself the support of Nurse and Bull. These plots involve all their participants in sins of varying degrees: lying, deceit, violations of obligations, betrayals of trust.

The play reaches its culmination with the "Entertainment of Musick" at Lord Foppington's house. Practically

all of the participants in the action of The Relapse are present. What is planned as a marriage feast, however, turns into a trial and a judgment. Apparently a trial presided over by Coupler and concerned with the question of whether Young Fashion or Lord Foppington is Hoyden's legal husband is bound to be a travesty on any serious court of law and is infinitely removed from the final Judgment of Man. Yet the mere fact that there is a scene of trial and judgment at the end of a play concerned with the fall of man is significant. The question to be decided by the trial at the end of the play is a question of law: who married Hoyden first. But throughout the play various characters were put to a trial which involved a moral test: Lord Foppington's generosity was tried by Young Fashion; Loveless' constancy by Berinthia; Amanda's virtue by Worthy; even Nurse and Bull underwent a trial of sorts by Coupler. In these earlier trials every character passed his own judgment and sentence. In the last trial, the assembled company, acting as jury, finds in favor of Young Fashion; but the judgment is ultimately passed by Sir Tunbelly when he says to Young Fashion: "Art thou Brother to that Noble Peer?-- Why then that Noble Peer, and thee, and thy Wife, and the Nurse, and the Priest--may all go and be damned together" (p. 99). Considering the characters of the people mentioned by Sir Tunbelly, one has some justification in expecting his judgment to come true. Yet the final word leaves everything suspended. The play ends in a "perhaps."

Thus, although on a very different level, the movement of The Relapse follows in broad outline that of the original fall. The fact that Loveless and Amanda leave their paradisiacal retreat before he falls and she comes close to it, does not really detract from the similarity between the two occasions. Yet at the same time this fact also points to the strongest difference between the situation of Amanda and Loveless and that of "our first Parents": the latter were indeed innocent in Paradise, while Loveless and Amanda were part of the fallen world before and after his relapse; their innocence is relative and their garden only appears a paradise to them. Even the "perhaps" with which the play ends seems appropriate to the theme of the fall. While the original fall deprived man of paradise for good, it did not deprive him of the possibility to rise to a state of grace (with the help of God); similarly the conditions in which the characters find themselves at the end of The Relapse are not unalterably fixed: there is neither eternal security nor eternal damnation as long as life on this earth lasts.

The faint outline of the original fall, just discernible in the movement of the action of The Relapse, gains some strength from the scattered verbal allusions to Paradise Lost. While these are admittedly not too numerous and at times faint, they are too important to be disregarded.

The whole first scene between Amanda and Loveless seems reminiscent of the argument between Adam and Eve in Book IX of Paradise Lost. There is, of course, nothing like a pat one-to-one relationship between the two scenes, but some of the arguments of Eve are echoed by Loveless, while Amanda warns against seeking temptation in words similar to Adam's. The fact that in The Relapse the roles are exchanged may in itself be indicative of an inversion of the order of creation, of a corruption of the world. In the garden of Eden it was the man who was aware of his nature and his position, in the garden of Loveless and Amanda, it is he who displays inferior insight and understanding. Moreover, when Loveless asserts that

the largest Boons that Heav'n thinks fit
to grant
To Things it has decreed shall crawl on Earth
Are in the Gift of Women form'd like Amanda/,
(p. 20)

one may be reminded of Adam's thanks to the Creator for the creation of Eve:

Thou hast fulfill'd
Thy words, Creator bounteous and benign,
Giver of all things faire, but fairest this
of all thy gifts.
(PL, VIII, 491-94).

In the same way, Loveless' reproach, "Fy, fy, Amanda, it is not kind thus to distrust me" (p. 22), may recall Eve's reproach of Adam (PL, IX, 285-89). Even the manner in which both Adam and Amanda abruptly terminate the argument is somewhat similar.

The echoes from Paradise Lost are, however, not confined to the opening scene. When Loveless recounts how he became aware that Berinthia posed a serious threat to his virtue he claims that "all the Frame of Nature shook with Apprehension" (p. 52), a statement which may recall the description of the reaction of nature to Eve's fall: "Nature from her seat/sighing through all her works gave signs of woe" (PL, IX, 782-82). Finally, Berinthia's attempt to explain the inconstancy of man by his failure to get the one woman "who is exactly what he could wish her because

either she is not to be had at all . . .
or he wants those opportunities that are
necessary to gain her. Either she likes
some body else much better than him, or
uses him like a Dog because he likes no
body as well as her: Still something or
other Fate claps in the way between them
and the Woman they are capable of being
fond of: And this makes them wander about,
from Mistress to Mistress, like a Pilgrim
from Town to Town, who every Night must have
fresh Lodging, and's in haste to be gone in
the Morning (p. 84).

bears some resemblance (in content, not in tone) to Adam's lament concerning man's situation:

. either
He never shall find out fit Mate, but such
As some misfortune brings him, or mistake,
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
by a farr worse, or if she love, withheld
By Parents, or his happie choice too late
Shall meet, alreadie linkt and Wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate or shame. (PL,
X, 899-906)

Taken alone, neither the movement of the action of The Relapse nor the few verbal echoes from Paradise Lost would mean much; but taken together they seem to undergird the theme of the fall of man in The Relapse.

ii

Compared to the consequences of the original fall, the sins that form the subject of The Relapse may appear inconsequential. Yet the results of the individual's choice to sin, or not to sin, are almost as important to him as those of the original fall are to mankind. The choice to sin is always based on the anticipation of acquiring some good as the result of sin, because it is against nature for man to desire evil for himself. The decision to sin, then, is based on faulty judgment or a misdirection of the will.⁴ Thus the cause for sin lies frequently in man's inability to foresee the consequences of his actions, as well as in his failure to distinguish between a greater and a lesser good. While original sin brought man the knowledge of good and evil, it deprived him at the same time of the mental powers always to distinguish between these two. After the fall, Adam and Eve "soon found thir Eyes how op'nd, and thir Minds/ How darkn'd."⁵ Thus one of the paradoxes of the original fall is that while it opened man's eyes to see good and evil, it also deprived his mind to a considerable degree of the ability to understand the difference between the

two. Seeing, man is often blind: to his own nature, to that of others, and to the consequences of his actions.

The antithesis of seeing and understanding, sight and insight, plays a crucial part in The Relapse. Words such as "see," "behold," "look," "gaze," "admire," and "know" recur throughout the play. So do images of looking glasses and perspectives, of periwigs and masks, and of clothes. The characters in the play need to go beyond eyesight, the appearances of things, to arrive at insight, the recognition of the reality behind the appearance; many fail to do so. But many critics of The Relapse share the shortcomings of the dramatis personae: the play demands of the reader, too, that he go beyond "what meets the eye" to arrive at the core of the play's meaning.

One of the difficulties besetting the critic is the fact that minor characters frequently introduce important aspects of the play. The problem of sight and insight is first introduced by the periwig maker in the scene of Lord Foppington's levee. The latter, complaining of the insufficient size of a new periwig, is told by the periwig maker: "Heaven bless my Eye-sight--Sure I look through the wrong end of the Perspective, for by my Faith, an't please your Honor, the broadest place I see in your Face, does not seem to me to be two inches diameter" (p. 28). This statement not only stresses the failure to see things right--a failure

shared by almost all the characters in the play--but it also offers an example of how multiple levels of meaning are achieved in The Relapse. On one level, the literal, the statement simply asserts the fact that objects viewed through the wrong end of the perspective are diminished in size; hence the discrepancy between the periwig maker's view of Lord Foppington's face and Lord Foppington's own view.⁶ But in a now obsolete sense, which was, however, current at the time of The Relapse, the key word perspective also means "the action of looking into something, close inspection; the faculty of seeing into a thing, insight, perceptiveness,"⁷ If one is aware of this meaning, one's attention may be drawn to Lord Foppington's failure to see things, his lack of insight. And, since perspective also means "a picture or figure so constructed as to produce some fantastic effect, e.g., appearing distorted or confused except from one particular point of view, or presenting totally different aspects from different points,"⁸ one may simultaneously realize that Lord Foppington is, in this sense, a perspective himself--a fantastic appearing 'constructed' figure rather than a man--and also that almost every character presents totally different aspects from different points. In the total context of the scene, however, the periwig maker's remark serves as a comment on Lord Foppington's character: by making clothes and his appearance his sole concern, Lord Foppington is his right size, and the wrong end of the perspective is the right end.

Vanbrugh employs this technique of using an apparently simple image and then expanding it to embrace a wide variety of meanings throughout The Relapse. Most frequently he achieves multiple levels of meaning by the use of allusion, inversion, and key words with a number of connotations.⁹ The first part of Act III, ii, is a case in point. At the beginning of the scene Loveless delivers a soliloquy which unequivocally states his decision to give in to his desire for Berinthia. The passage is important enough to be quoted complete:

Sure Fate has yet some business to be done,	1
Before Amanda's Heart and mine must rest:	
Else, why amongst those Legions of her Sex,	
Which throng the World,	
Should she pick out for her Companion,	5
The only one on Earth,	
Whom Nature has endow'd for her undoing?	
Undoing was't, I said?--Who shall undo her?	
Is not her Empire fix'd? Am I not hers?	
Did she not rescue me, a grov'ling Slave,	10
When chained and bound by that black	
Tyrant Vice,	
I labour'd in his vilest Drudgery?	
Did she not ransom me, and set me free?	
Nay more:	
When by my Follies sunk	15
To a poor tatter'd despicable Beggar,	
Did she not lift me up to envied Fortune?	
Give me her self, and all that she possess?	
Without a Thought of more Return	
Than what a poor repenting Heart might make	20
her,	
Han't she done this? And if she has,	
Am I not strongly bound to love her for it?	
To love her!--Why, do I not love her then?	
By Earth and Heaven I do.	
Nay, I have Demonstration that I do:	25
For I wou'd sacrifice my Life to serve her.	
Yet hold:--If laying down my Life	
Be Demonstration of my Love,	

What is't I feel in favour of Berinthia?
 For shou'd she be in danger, methinks I
 cou'd incline
 To risque it for her Service too; and yet
 I do not love her.
 How then subsists my Proof?--
 --O, I have found it out.
 What I would do for one, is demonstration
 of my Love

30

And if I'd do as much for t'other: it is Demonstration of
 my Friendship.--
 Ay--it must be so. I find I'm very much her Friend.
 --Yet let me ask myself one puzzling Question more:
 Whence springs this mighty Friendship all at once? For our
 Acquaintance is of a late Date.
 Now Friendship's said to be of tedious Growth; its Root com-
 pos'd of tender
 Fibres, nice in their Taste, cautious in spreading, check'd
 with the
 least Corruption in the Soil; long e'er it take, and longer
 still e'er it appear
 to do so: whilst mine is in a moment shot so high, and fix'd
 so fast, it seems
 beyond the Power of Storms to shake it. I doubt it thrives
 too fast.

(pp. 50-51)

The tone of Loveless' soliloquy here is strongly reminiscent
 of that in the opening scene of The Relapse. Yet the dif-
 ference in his attitude is the more striking because of the
 similarity of tone. The change in Loveless' attitude is
 further emphasized by his attempt to shift the responsibility
 for his actions from himself to fate and Amanda (ll. 1-7).
 It seems reasonable to assume that Loveless does not fully
 believe what he says, but is looking for excuses. This
 assumption, however, rather than absolving him from responsi-
 bility, only emphasizes the extent to which he is respon-
 sible, particularly in view of his strong obligations to

Amanda which he readily acknowledges (ll. 10-22). The language of this passage is strongly reminiscent of the language of the conversion scene in Love's Last Shift, in which Amanda becomes in her own and in Loveless' eyes a type of redeemer. Vanbrugh's Loveless, however, although his language implies that he views Amanda in a manner similar to that of Cibber's Loveless, is not prevented from choosing Berinthia and adultery, notwithstanding his assertion that he would sacrifice his life for Amanda. That Loveless is quite aware that to call his sexual appetite for Berinthia friendship is a euphemism, is demonstrated by his musings on the sudden growth of that friendship. In his contemplation on this sudden growth, Loveless presents a picture of an inversion of nature: a plant that far exceeds its natural rate of growth. Moreover, by asserting that storms could not shake his "friendship" for Berinthia, Loveless reminds the reader of his earlier assertion that "the rudest Hurricane of wild Desire" could not shake his constancy. Since his present statement clearly contradicts and renders worthless his earlier one, his reliance on stoic detachment is proved wrong and "the Frailty of Mankind even in his most fix't Determinations" is asserted.

By deliberately and consciously consenting to sin, Loveless has completed the progression toward his fall. This fact becomes particularly apparent in his exchange with Berinthia

immediately following. The first part of this exchange consists largely of double-entendres which make it abundantly clear that Loveless and Berinthia are reaching an agreement concerning their future relationship. When Loveless describes his symptoms to Berinthia, however, he resorts to the language of courtly love:

When 'twas my Chance to see you at the
 Play,
 A random Glance you threw at first allarm'd
 me,
 I cou'd not turn my Eyes from whence the
 Danger came:
 I gaz'd upon you, till you shot again,
 And then my Fears came on me.
 My Heart began to pant, my limbs to tremble,
 My Blood grew thin, my Pulse beat quick,
 My Eyes grew hot and dim, and all the Frame
 of Nature
 Shook with Apprehension.
 'Tis true, some small Recruits of Resolution
 My Manhood brought to my Assistance,
 And by their Help I made a Stand a while,
 But found at last your Arrows flew so thick,
 They cou'd not fail to pierce me;
 So left the Field,
 And fled for shelter to Amanda's Arms.

(p. 52)

This passage, dealing with the encounter Loveless had earlier described to Amanda in very different terms (II, i), expands the immediately present scene to include not only a great deal of what went before it within the play, but also

a host of universal significances in the experience of man: the strong man proved weak; the defeat of reason by passion, the ideal of the real. . . the fatal

discrepancies between appearance and reality, especially for one who had been so critically wise; and, embracing all these the fall of man from a state of grace through the defects of his nature.¹⁰

The most obvious images in the second passage quoted are those of courtly love: love entering through the eye, the physical effects of love (panting, dimmed vision, quickened pulse), and the arrows piercing the lover. Yet even if considered strictly from a point of view of courtly love, the passage shows some inversion. A true courtly lover would not flee but serve his lady. He certainly would have never fled to someone else's arms, particularly those of a wife. But it is quite obvious, particularly from the preceding exchange between Loveless and Berinthia, that he is not a courtly lover, even though he is imaged as a knight in armour. The fact that he has implied the same image of himself earlier indicates the change in his attitude. He had earlier answered Amanda's warning that by going to town he might expose himself to danger because "the Dart that has not far to fly, will put the best of Armour to a dangerous Trial," with the words:

That Trial past and y'are at Ease for ever;
When you have seen the Helmet prov'd,
You'll apprehend no more, for him that wears it.
(p. 21)

By using the image of the knight at a point when his fall is a foregone conclusion, Loveless exposes the foolishness of his earlier position and tacitly asserts his own weakness.

While his earlier reference to himself as a Christian knight doing battle against temptation was an unqualified assertion of his strength, Loveless' weakness now is demonstrated by the fact that in spite of his flight he is unable to resist. The Christian knight has become a courtly lover, arranging an occasion for adultery.

By employing the language of courtly love, a rather commonplace device and possibly a hit at the précieuses, Vanbrugh adds meaning beyond the literal to the scene. While Cupid's arrow enters the lover's heart through the eye, sin, too, frequently enters in the same way. The eye, then, becomes an entrance way not only of love, as in the courtly tradition, but also of sin. Loveless' use of the term gaze in the passage quoted--a term which, as Amanda indicates, implies desire--expands it to include the Christian concept of the process of sin: to see a delectable object, to desire it and to consent to its enjoyment, i.e., take delight in it. Loveless had used the same term earlier when he told Amanda of his "harmless Entertainment" at the theater. On this occasion Amanda interpreted his statement, "I do confess I gaz'd upon her; nay, eagerly I gaz'd upon her," as indicative of desire. Even though Loveless denied the truth of Amanda's observation, it suggests that he has reached the second stage on his way toward the fall. He shows his awareness of the danger of allowing one's eye

to dwell on a desirable object when he said; "I snatched my Eyes away: they pleaded hard for leave to look again, but I grew absolute and they obey'd." Obviously, awareness of danger did not shake Loveless' belief in his strength. That his strength was not such as he assumed became obvious when, having seen Berinthia again, he wished "to stay and gaze a little longer on that Creature." Even though he admonished himself that he had had his share of beauty and must not covet more, his instant decision to lie to Amanda in answer to her question how he liked Berinthia--"whate'er her Reason, I must not tell her true"--suggests that he actually did "covet more." At the end of the scene, Loveless' fall is complete, except for the actual act of adultery.

When this act occurs in the justly famous closet scene (IV, iii), Loveless' world as it was presented in the first act of The Relapse has been turned upside down. The whole scene takes place in the dark, an indication of Loveless' state of mind. Yet he is still aware of the sinfulness of his intended action: this is probably the reason why he needs darkness and hiding places. He does not deceive himself, but in order to enjoy the satisfaction of his appetite he needs to deceive Amanda. The ideal image of the stoic sage which Loveless had of himself at the opening of the play has given way to the reality of Loveless, the relapsed Libertine.

Upon discovering Loveless in her closet, Berinthia

screams, "A Ghost, a Ghost," and Loveless calms her by saying: "Peace, my Dear, it's no Ghost, take it in your Arms, you'll find 'tis worth a hundred of them" (p. 69). This passage with its juxtaposition of ghost (spirit) and arms (body) may imply on one hand that Loveless has lost his spiritual qualities, he has become all body, while on the other hand he has become a ghost, a shadow of his former self. The finale of the scene in which Loveless, having put out the candle, carries Berinthia (protesting very softly), into her closet has been acclaimed as one of the high points in English comedy.¹¹ The comedy of the scene lies, however, not only in the contrast between Berinthia's words and her feelings, or the discrepancy between Loveless' past promises and present behavior;¹² it lies particularly in the paradox that in winning in one sense--he conquers Berinthia--he loses in another--his fall is complete. Loveless' fall, too, involves an apparent paradox: it is accompanied by what appears to be on the surface an increasing insight into his own nature. He knew almost from the moment Berinthia crossed his path again that he was lost. By giving in to temptation as readily as he did, Loveless moved from the extreme view of the supremacy of the mind to the equally extreme view of the complete rule of the senses: from ultra-stoicism to ultra-epicureanism. Neither of these views apparently succeeds in furnishing a valid guide for his conduct. The fact that Loveless "sinks after the fourth Act," as Collier puts it, only serves to underscore his fall.

If sin is spiritual death (as in the Christian view it is), then Loveless dies in more ways than the one implied by his remark to Berinthia: "We'll dye together, my charming Angel." Loveless has moved from philosophical pride and aloofness, to sin, to darkness: "the dark Curtain of Eternal Night" has, in a sense, come between him and Amanda.

Amanda's development to some extent parallels that of Loveless. While she shows from the beginning more insight into the human condition in general, as is demonstrated by her reminder of the mortality of man, her warning against seeking temptation, her doubts concerning the efficacy of human reason, she, too, is lacking in insight into her own nature. Yet she is a strange mixture of knowledge of man and the world, and of ignorance of both of them. She is quick to see the weakness in Loveless' reasoning when he asks her whether he "shou'd be jealous, because [she] had Eyes," if she told him about having seen a handsome man. She realizes it is not the seeing in itself that constitutes danger, but the gazing with "eager Eyes" that implies desire. On the other hand, in her conversations with Berinthia, Amanda insists--sometimes almost too much--on her ignorance of the ways of the world. Yet when Berinthia mentions that the lovers of this age have "too much Honour to do anything under-hand; they do all above board," Amanda comments that "that wou'd make [her] hate a Man." This statement so

closely resembles one later made by Berinthia that one is surprised to hear it from Amanda. When Amanda expresses her belief that Loveless "does not like his new Mistress" well enough to bestow anything more, than a little outward gallantry upon her," Berinthia indignantly refutes her remarks with the words: "Don't you think she is a Woman to be fobb'd off so" (p. 85). Amanda's readiness to be informed of the intrigues of the town, or at least Berinthia's, implies that she is more interested in sexual relationships than she would admit. Though she does not seem to know it herself, she shows a certain inclination for Worthy from the start. It almost seems as if her question concerning the effect of "other Men" on "Women of Reputation" were asked specifically with Worthy in mind. She considers Worthy a pattern of the man of sense, and confesses that he "has been tampering too." In the same scene she shows her awareness of the problem of distinguishing between appearance and reality, by her wondering "whence it proceeds that Vice (which cannot change its Nature) shou'd so far change at least its Shape, as that the self-same Crime propos'd from one shall seem a Monster gaping at your Ruine, when from another it shall look so kind, as tho it were your Friend and never meant to harm you" (p. 40). Aware of the discrepancy between appearance and reality, Amanda falls victim to the very thing she wonders about by trusting the appearance of friendship in Berinthia. Worthy makes good use of this fact and practically

echoes Amanda's words in his happy contemplations on the advantages of employing "a young Bawd, and a handsome one for my Money." The reason for Berinthia's success in the role of bawd is, he thinks, that "Lewdness looks Heavenly to a Woman, when an Angel appears in its Cause; but when a Hag is Advocate, she thinks it comes from the Devil. An old Woman has something so terrible in her looks, that whilst she is perswading your Mistress to forget she has a Soul, she stares Hell and Damnation full in the Face" (pp. 81-2). This remark of Worthy's not only shows that he, too, is aware of the deceptive quality of appearances (an awareness which is not surprising in one of his experiences), but also that he is aware that his intended seduction of Amanda would lead her into a sinful action. Amanda, however, does not worry about any danger coming her way because she relies on her love and virtue to protect her. Worthy's charms, she asserts, could never "have Power to shake Her," because Loveless "sits triumphant in Her Heart and nothing can dethrone him"(p. 44). One is here reminded of Loveless' assertion that "the rudest Hurricane of wild Desire" could never have the power of shaking his constancy. Since at this point Loveless' relapse is a foregone conclusion, Amanda's use of similar terms to express her unshakeable virtue may suggest that she is not as safe as she believes herself to be.

Amanda's inclination for Worthy, present to some

degree from the beginning, increases as the play progresses. She holds him in such esteem that "if [she] were to recommend [a Gallant] to a Friend, he shou'd be the Man" (p. 67). Finally she considers him the one through whom she could--if she would--take revenge on Loveless. Amanda's estimate of Worthy, in spite of his plotting to seduce her, is ultimately proved correct. In the conversion scene, which has received more critical attention than any other in The Relapse, and which has caused the charge of sentimentalism against Vanbrugh by many critics,¹³ Worthy surpasses even Amanda's highest expectations. Before Worthy appears on the scene at this occasion, Amanda reflects on Loveless' infidelity and the steps she might take in a soliloquy which is in part reminiscent of that of Loveless in Act III, ii. Yet while Loveless was rationalizing his resolve to give in to his desire for Berinthia and relapse, Amanda reaches the decision not to pay Loveless in kind. He put the blame for his situation at least to some extent on Fate and Amanda; she, while not absolving him, accepts some of the blame for his relapse. She does, however, consider his present relapse less forgivable than his earlier desertion of her, because then,

. . . the roving Flights of his unfinished Youth,
 Had strong Excuses, from the Plea of Nature;
 Reason had thrown the Reins loose on his Neck,
 And slipt him to unlimited Desire.
 If therefore he went wrong,
 He had a Claim to my forgiveness, and I did
 him right,

while now,

. . . the Years of Manhood Rein him in,
And Reason well digested into Thought,
Has pointed out the Course he ought to run;
If now he strays,
'Twou'd be as weak and mean in me to pardon,
As it has been in him t'offend.

(p. 90)

The first section quoted may recall Loveless' statement at the beginning of The Relapse. Praising his peace and contentment in his "little soft Retreat," he contrasts his present state to "all the roving Pleasures of his Youth," and pronounces them inferior. The second section also echoes a statement made by Loveless: first in regard to reason as his guide, on which he so eloquently insisted. But even more so as regards his statement that if Amanda could believe in the possibility of his relapsing,

He must appear to her a thing,
Of such an undigested Composition,
That but to think of him with Inclination,
Wou'd be a Weakness in her Taste,
Her Virtue scarce cou'd answer

(p. 22)

Thus, were Amanda to choose adultery too, she could justify her action with strong support from Loveless' own earlier statement. Yet Amanda, angry though she is, is not attempting to rationalize an action on which she is already determined, as Loveless did, but she is trying to arrive at an understanding of the situation. Even though Loveless is convicted by his own earlier statement, she assumes some of the blame for his action:

My Beauty possibly is in the Wain:
Perhaps sixteen has greater Charms for him.

Yet Amanda also knows that her charms are still powerful and provide her with the means of paying Loveless back in kind; if she does not do so, as she decides, "the Want is not in her Power but in her Will."

Thus Amanda, resolved on preserving her virtue, encounters Worthy and almost loses it. By prearrangement with Berinthia, he meets her at a critical moment. He is determined to seduce her and, judging from his earlier statements to Berinthia, he is certain of success. In spite of her resolve not to revenge herself on Loveless, Amanda realizes the danger of her situation--"Protect me, Heav'n, for this looks ominous." Her ensuing conversation with Worthy strongly recalls Loveless' exchange with Berinthia in the garden. While Worthy's approach is somewhat more disguised and delicate than Loveless'--owing, one assumes, to his knowledge of Amanda's virtuous character--his intention is quite clear and is fully understood by Amanda. As in the earlier scene, the sufferings of love are here, too, discussed in terms of a physical ailment. The "thorn" that torments Amanda, is "in a tender Part. It can't be drawn without a World of Pain: Yet out it must." These words suggest that in spite of her resolve not to cuckold Loveless, Amanda intends to put an end to her love for him. Worthy, as can be expected, offers to assist in the "operation." He appeals both to her

pride, which should make her "slight her God, if he neglects his Angel," and to her pity, which should lead her to "extend the Arms of Mercy to Worthy's Aid." He describes himself in words similar to those of Loveless as a "burning Lover" who is beset by all the symptoms of a violent passion. Unlike Loveless, however, Worthy seems to imply that his love for Amanda contains an element of stability, when he answers her question as to where a "softer usage" of her heart was to be found, with the words:

'Tis here, within this faithful Breast;
 which if you doubt, I'll rip it up before
 your Eyes; lay all its Secrets open to
 your View; and then, you'll see 'twas
 sound.

(p. 91)

That this statement is calculated to impress Amanda, rather than to reveal his true feeling, seems likely in view of Worthy's earlier proposal to Berinthia that he might be ready to be in love with her again, if she could only help him to "a short Campaign with Amanda." Amanda doubts his sincerity and claims to have been deceived by such words before. When Worthy offers to prove his true devotion, she states the condition under which she would "rate his Heart so high; she possibly might purchas't with a part of hers."

At this point the debate takes on a strong Christian overtone and becomes particularly concerned with the question of the will. Worthy, assured by Amanda that her condition is in his power, exclaims:

Then, Heav'n, thou art my Friend, and
 I am blest; for if 'tis in my Power,
 my Will I'm sure will reach it. No mat-
 ter what the terms may be, when such a
 Recompence is offer'd. O tell me quickly
 what this proof must be: What is it will
 convince you of my Love?

(p. 92, my italics)

Thus Worthy's reliance on his will being equal to Amanda's terms is based on his expectation of a compensation: possession of Amanda's person. Besides that, Worthy's words quoted above recall Amanda's earlier claim that her failure to revenge herself on Loveless is not owing to a lack of her power, but of her will. Both Worthy and Amanda appear rather certain of being able to direct their will as they see fit. When, however, Amanda states her terms--that he "forbear to ask whatever is unfit for her to grant"--Worthy no longer attempts to direct his will so as to comply with Amanda's demands, but instead he imputes her attitude to coyness and only presses her harder. Under the force of his attack Amanda's will, in spite of her firm resolution, proves unequal to the task and she has to call on heaven and virtue for aid. Only with their assistance does Amanda succeed in conquering her inclination. Worthy, however, is still not entirely conquered. The end of the scene finds them speaking in terms strongly reminiscent of the act of contrition:

Worthy: What must I do to be forgiven?

Amanda: Repent, and never more offend.

Worthy: Repentance for past Crimes is

just and easy; but sin no more's
 a Task too hard for Mortals.
 Amanda: Yet those who hope for Heav'n,
 must use their best Endeavours
 to perform it. (p. 92)

Worthy's words here contradict his earlier assertion concerning the strength of his will. Moreover, by calling "repentence for past crimes just and easy," but the resolution to sin no more "a Task too hard for Mortals," Worthy suggests the difficulty involved in the virtuous life. Clearly this passage refutes the idea of the "easy" life of virtue that Gibber's play implies. Amanda, too, is aware of the difficulty of sinning no more. She does not make any claims that there is ever any certainty that one will, indeed, sin no more. All one can ask of anyone is that he use his best endeavors to avoid the repetition of sin. Her statement, like Worthy's, denies the truth of the sentimental view that virtue is easily achieved and easily kept, and that being virtuous brings necessarily tangible and material rewards with it. In her case, virtue has to be its own reward, because beyond that she has nothing to expect.

Amanda's refutation of Worthy's statement that "Flesh and Blood" prevent the best endeavors from being successful, suggests also a refutation of both the stoic and the epicurean point of view. Her words are:

Whate'er /Flesh and Blood/ are; there is

a Weight in Resolution sufficient for their Ballance. The Soul, I do confess, is usually so careless of its Charge, so soft, and so indulgent to desire, it leaves the Reins in the wild Hands of Nature, who, like a Phaeton, drives the fiery Chariot, and sets the World on Flame. Yet still the Sovereignty is in the Mind, whene'er it pleases to exert its Force. (pp. 92-3)

The comparison of nature to Phaeton implies that nature is unfit to rule man's actions, thus denying the libertine (epicurean) view of following nature. The assertion of the sovereignty of the mind might be taken as a support of the stoic view, Loveless' Heaven in the mind. But the preceding statement, stressing the weight of resolution, seems to indicate that mind is here equated with will. If this is the case, then Amanda asserts the supremacy of the will, which is capable of rejecting sin, even though it frequently assents to sin, specifically by allowing nature--fallen nature--to assume command over man's actions. Amanda's statement does not glibly assert that to subject nature to the will is easy: all she says is that it is possible. That even with "Resolution sufficient for the Ballance" of flesh and blood, the latter may get the upper hand was demonstrated in the last scene between Amanda and Worthy. She had to call on Heaven and virtue to be saved. Yet even the act of calling on supernatural assistance implies that Amanda's will was properly directed; otherwise she would not have felt the need or inclination to call and, hence, probably, would have fallen.

Although Worthy is conquered by Amanda's virtue, he does not claim that he will sin no more forever after. For the moment "the gross, the vile desires of Flesh and Blood . . . are turn'd to Adoration." However, "how long this influence will last, Heaven knows." This speech is the one that has earned for Worthy the name of a sentimental here among the critics, beginning with Collier. A superficial reading of the scene may, indeed, lead to the conclusion that there is little difference between Worthy's speech and that of Loveless at the end of Love's Last Shift. Even a careless reader, however, could hardly fail to notice the difference between Worthy's reluctance to predict his future actions as opposed to Loveless' positive assertion of the permanence of his reform. This opposition points to the feature of the scene which renders it most incompatible with sentimentalism. That feature consists in the strongly Christian overtones permeating the scene. The atmosphere of Christian orthodoxy is established by Amanda's insistence on the decisive role of the will, combined with her awareness of the difficulties involved in directing the will to its proper purpose; by the close resemblance of part of the discourses to the act of contrition; and by the rejection of nature as a fit guide to human conduct. The view of human nature implied by these considerations is that of orthodox Christianity. In this view, which regards human nature as

fallen, it is extremely difficult (though possible) to acquire or retain virtue, and the sacrifices involved in its pursuit are at times almost--or to most--beyond the capabilities of "Flesh and Blood." Just as Loveless, paradoxically, lost and won in the closet scene, so Amanda and Worthy win and lose in the conversion scene. She wins a victory over temptation at the price of giving up the man she loves, Worthy, for one she has come to hold in contempt. Worthy too, somewhat reluctantly, conquers temptation and by winning a moral victory loses his chance of possessing Amanda. While her virtue changes his lust to love, it also precludes a happy ending for them. The very paradox underlying the conversion scene may suggest the paradox at the basis of Christianity: that one must lose one's life in order to gain life.

Worthy, at the end of The Relapse has, at least for the time being, accepted Amanda's terms and even admits that "Virtue is a graceful Habit" which enhances the attractions of a woman. This point of view constitutes a great change from that expressed in his conversations with Berinthia. There, neither Worthy nor Berinthia believe in virtue, even though they are willing to believe Amanda sincere in her insistence on her virtue. But Worthy suspects that "what she takes for her Virtue . . . is some Relick of lawful Love" (p. 82), whereas Berinthia considers

it "a presumptuous thing in a Woman, to assume the Name of Vertuous, till she has heartily hated her Husband, and been soundly in love with somebody else" (p. 55). Berinthia's statement is true to a point: to rely too heavily on an untried virtue may, indeed, be presumptuous and lead to a fall, as the case of Loveless proves. On the other hand Berinthia, too, presumes too much in taking her own attitude as a norm: Amanda proves that a woman can experience all the things Berinthia names and still remain virtuous. In plotting their campaign against Amanda's virtue, Berinthia and Worthy take as little note of the reality of human nature, as does Loveless in making his plans for the "Fiery-Trial of his Vertue." He relies too much on the spirit, and fails; they rely entirely on the flesh, and fail also.

Both the contrasts and similarities in the view of human nature held by Amanda and Loveless (in different degrees) on one hand, and Berinthia and Worthy on the other, are suggested by their use of similar images. Loveless' use of the image of the storm-tossed sea and Amanda's of the ship have been discussed above. In their plot to seduce Amanda, Worthy and Berinthia also employ images of the sea and the ship, albeit in a different sense. When Berinthia tells Worthy that Amanda "thinks him handsome and discreet," he retorts: "Good, that's thinking half Seas over. One more Tide brings us into Port" (p. 55). In

her answer, Berinthia cautions him to remember that "there's a difficult Bar to pass," he puts his trust into his "pilot," and answers her invitation to "weigh Anchor," with the words, "I'm under Sail already." Even though the context in which the ship and sea images are used here differs from that of Amanda's and Loveless' discourse in Act I, i, the fact that such similar images are employed in two apparently very different scenes draws attention to the underlying similarity of those scenes. Both are concerned with temptation: Loveless seeks temptation, Berinthia and Worthy seek to tempt Amanda. Moreover, Loveless' failure to heed Amanda's warning that "the strongest Vessels, if they put to Sea, may possibly be lost" (p. 21), proves to be a mistake and leads to his fall. Worthy and Berinthia, on the other hand, expecting to steer his ship into the harbor of adultery, find that their confidence in the "Pilot" was misplaced, because the "difficult Bar" proved too difficult even for their united efforts. A similar effect results from Loveless' and Amanda's evoking of images of warfare, and--at least by implication--of the knight in armour, when they debate the dangers of the town in relation to Loveless' eagerness to prove his virtue (pp. 21-2). Worthy and Berinthia, too, employ images of warfare when planning the final assault on Amanda's virtue (pp. 83-2). In this case the use of such images is commonplace, yet the two instances combined again emphasize likeness in apparent unlikeness.

Left alone after her conversation with Loveless in the garden (III, ii), Berinthia muses:

Now I pray to Heaven, with all my Heart
and Soul, that the Devil in Hell may
take me, if ever--I was better pleas'd
in my Life.-- This Man has bewitch'd me,
that's certain. Well, I am condemn'd;
but thanks to Heaven I feel myself each
Moment more and more prepar'd for my
Execution--Nay, to that degree, I don't
perceive I have the least Fear of Dying.
No, I find, let the--Executioner be but a
Man, and there's nothing will suffer with
more Resolution than a Woman. Well, I
never had but one Intrigue yet: But I confess
I long to have another. Pray Heaven
it end as the first did, tho', that we may
both grow weary at a time; for 'tis a
Melancholy thing for Lovers to outlive
one another. (p. 53)

The image of the executioner also appears in the conversion scene between Amanda and Worthy. But while he uses it in the same sense as Berinthia does, Amanda looks at it from a different view. She equates the morals of the executioner with those of the Wretch about whose neck he puts the cord. Thus Loveless, Berinthia's "Executioner," and Worthy, the would-be executioner of Loveless in one sense, and Amanda in another, are put on one level, while Amanda, denying the justice of the execution and declining the executioner's services, proves Berinthia's statement concerning women in general untrue. Moreover, Berinthia is ready to suffer her execution with resolution, while Amanda uses resolution to offset the weight of "Flesh and Blood." Berinthia's observation that

"'tis a Melancholy thing for Lovers to outlive one another," is reminiscent of Loveless' earlier statement that the "bitter Pill" of the "mournful separation" of death "doubles its ungrateful Taste, when Lovers are to swallow it" (p. 20). But Loveless' words are a comment on Amanda's reminder that "the dark Curtain of Eternal Night at last must fall between them," while Berinthia's merely imply the short duration of an "Intrigue." Thus in this instance, again, an image employed with religious implications by Loveless and Amanda, has been inverted to a purely carnal level by Worthy and Berinthia.

Considering Worthy's and Berinthia's preoccupation with the satisfaction of their appetites throughout the play, one may wonder at the number of religious images and biblical allusions employed by them. Berinthia's opening lines in the passage quoted above obviously constitute an inversion of prayer, in words as well as in substance. Worthy having drawn Berinthia's attention to the advantages his affair with Amanda would have for the conduct of her intrigue with Loveless, she remarks: "Well, I could be glad to have no body's sin to answer for but my own. But where there is a necessity--" and Worthy breaks in: "Right! as you say, where there is a necessity, a Christian is bound to help his Neighbour. So, good Berinthia, lose no time, but let us

begin the Dance as fast as we can" (p. 54). "Necessity" brings Young Fashion's situation and Lord Foppington's refusal to help him into the picture. In the context of the passage and in juxtaposition with dance (the "olde daunce"), Worthy's remark becomes an inversion of the concept of Christian charity. But even though the concept is inverted, its presence in the scene serves as a reminder of the lack of charity in Berinthia and Worthy.

In Berinthia's scene with Worthy, in which she presents her plan to catch Amanda at a critical moment, a similar inversion occurs. Worthy expresses his appreciation of Berinthia's plan by exclaiming: "Thou Angel of Light, let me fall down and adore thee"; She replies, "Thou Minister of Darkness, get up again, for I hate to see the Devil at his devotions." When Worthy wonders how he can requite her, she assures him that "Vertue is its own Reward: there's a pleasure in doing good, which sufficiently pays itself" (p. 83). Coming from Berinthia, this is sheer irony, yet Amanda is to demonstrate only shortly after that virtue is, indeed, its own reward, and conquer Worthy by this demonstration. On the other hand, this exchange may also serve as a reminder that the Angel of Light and the Minister of Darkness are the same: Lucifer became Satan through his fall. Thus the fall is again brought into view.

of The Relapse "for a natural Instance of the Frailty of Mankind even in his most fixt Determinations," he was referring primarily to the Amanda-Loveless plot of the play. Yet the Young Fashion-Hoyden plot displays the frailty of mankind in even greater variety, although it does not put as much stress on "fixt Determinations." This plot, often considered the more important and more entertaining of the two,¹⁴ treats the problem of The Relapse from a slightly different point of view. In the Amanda-Loveless plot, none of the characters is compelled by necessity. Whatever they choose to do, or not to do, has no particular bearing on their external circumstances. All the discourses and contemplations center on questions of vice and virtue, sin and redemption, obligation and inclination. These are, indeed, important considerations, capable of being treated in comedy, as The Relapse proves. Because Loveless' relapse involves adultery and Amanda's virtue consists in chastity, all the sins of the plot are in some way connected with sexual irregularities. In the Young Fashion-Hoyden plot, on the other hand, the conflict centers on the demands of necessity versus moral obligation. Since Young Fashion, undeniably the main character of the plot, is constantly beset by financial difficulties and the problems of solving them, most of the sins and shortcomings of the characters connected with him are related to greed and other transgressions

involving property and material possessions. This is not to say that sex does not enter into the plot at all, but only that it plays a less prominent part than in the other plot.

In spite of the fact that there are certain differences between the two plots, they are connected by more than merely the person of Lord Foppington who is commonly considered the only connecting link. For one thing, both plots deal with different aspects of sin and the problem of reconciling the conflict between the demands of conscience and inclination or necessity. For another, passages spoken by a character in one plot are echoed by one in the other, often thereby exposing similarities in apparently dissimilar characters or situations. The problem of sight and insight is important to both plots. And then there is, of course, Lord Foppington, who is the external link between the two plots.

To say that Lord Foppington belongs more to the Fashion-Hoyden than the Amanda-Loveless plot may appear strange in view of his attempted debauchery of Amanda and also of his complete freedom from necessity. But his preoccupation with things connects him closer to the Fashion-Hoyden plot. Among his favorite things are looking glasses, and his favorite occupation is to look at himself. He orders his people to "dispose of Glasses so, that he can see

/him/self before and behind; for he loves to see /him/self all raund" (p. 26). He brags that his gallery "is furnished with nothing but Books and Looking-glasses" (p. 36), and considers the chocolate house" the prettiest Prospect in the World; you have Looking-glasses all raund you" (p. 37). Yet though he is constantly looking at himself, Lord Foppington never sees himself: he considers himself "a Man of Quality and Breeding," while others see him as "an impertinent Focl," an "Essence Bottle," and a "Musk-Cat."

In spite of his failure to see, Lord Foppington is most concerned with appearance, particularly his own: hence his predilection for looking glasses, periwigs and clothes. His particular interest in his face is demonstrated at his levee, when he claims that the inferior size of his new periwig makes his face look like that of a trumpeter. He also maintains that getting up before ten is "the worst thing in the World for the Complexion" (p. 37); he warns Young Fashion not to fly into a passion, "for Passion is the most unbecoming thing in the World--to the Face" (p. 48); finally, when he finds that Hoyden is lost to him, he decides that "the wisest thing a Man can do with an aking Heart, is to put on a serene Countenance, far a Philosophical Air is the most becoming thing in the World to a Person of Quality" (p. 99). This last remark is not only

characteristic of Lord Foppington's concern with appearance--he considers a philosophical air becoming, not a philosophical attitude--but it also may recall Loveless' earlier insistence on philosophic detachment. By the time Lord Foppington's remark occurs, Loveless has already demonstrated that his reliance on philosophy did not keep him from relapsing. Thus by reminding the reader of Loveless' former certainty concerning his virtue, Lord Foppington's remark again points to the "Frailty of Mankind."

Lord Foppington is not only unable to see, notwithstanding his interest in appearances, he is also apparently unable to feel. This inability is amusingly presented in the scene of his levee through a conversation with the shoemaker. Denying Lord Foppington's complaint that his shoe hurts, the shoemaker answers the latter's question, "Why wilt thou undertake to perswade me I cannot feel?" with the words: "Your Lordship may please to feel what you think fit; but that Shoe does not hurt you" (p. 27). The shoemaker's insistence that he knows whether or not the shoe hurts Lord Foppington is, of course, ridiculous, and Lord Foppington's acquiescence only shows that he considers a pair of handsome shoes worth the price of being pinched "execrably." But the apparently ridiculous statement is also true: Lord Foppington indeed only feels what he thinks fit. He obviously does not think it fit to

consider the feelings and welfare of others, as he demonstrates by his treatment of his younger brother, by his assertion that his heart is always "a la glace," and by his attempted debauch of Amanda because she is "a Woman of an Insolent Vertue."

Lord Foppington's lack of feeling indicates that he is basically a vicious man. The fact that his antics are ridiculous and furnish much occasion for laughter does not detract from his viciousness. It is revealed by his calm assertion that his heart "cut a Caper up to his Mouth" when he learned of his father's death. His estimate of women also shows his viciousness. In spite of his constantly expressed admiration for "the Ladies," and his pretenses of "violent intrigues," he compares a Woman to a Pad-Nag, and asserts that "of all the things that belong to a Woman, He has an Aversion to her Heart; far when a Woman has once given you her Heart--you can never get rid of the rest of her Body" (p. 47). He displays the same estimate of women in his dealings with Hoyden: he makes the consummation of his marriage--"making Hoyden happy" as he calls it--contingent on not "disordering the Coach harses," and at the Entertainment at his house, he invites Loveless to try his luck with Hoyden.

Lord Foppington's blindness is mostly confined to himself and to the effect he has on others. He mistakes

Aranda's ironic comment, "Your Lordship is too entertaining to grow troublesome any where," for an invitation to "lie with her." Similarly he misinterprets Hoyden's eagerness to get to town as a sign of her violent passion for him. When his self-love does not get in his way, however, he is an acute observer, particularly on account of his lack of feeling. His judgment of Bull and Hoyden is accurate, but entirely lacking in kindness. But kindness cannot be expected from Lord Foppington. All his thoughts center on himself. Young Fashion's estimate that Lord Foppington "would not give his Powder Puff to redeem Young Fashion's Soul," is quite correct. Yet Young Fashion resolves to put his brother to the trial before executing Coupler's plan. Given Lord Foppington's character, the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

But the mere fact that Young Fashion even puts him to the test, although he is familiar with his character, is indicative of Young Fashion's reluctance to put Coupler's plan into action. Young Fashion, moreover, views life realistically: he shares neither Loveless' idealism (at the beginning of the play), nor Worthy's and Lord Foppington's cynicism. Yet he shares with Worthy an insight into the nature and the motives of people which enables him to judge the characters of others and his own accurately. And he resembles Loveless in that he too falls after carefully deliberating his alternatives. However, as his trial

of Lord Foppington suggests, Young Fashion does not consent to sin as quickly as Loveless, nor are the demands of his conscience as urgent as they are in the case of Loveless. Thus Young Fashion can plead mitigating circumstances, which Loveless cannot.

One of these is Young Fashion's desperate financial situation. His necessity is great and when he decides that "Conscience shall not starve him either," he only follows the law of self-preservation for which even Christianity makes allowances. Yet he gives his brother a chance to prove his generosity. Only after Lord Foppington fails that test does Young Fashion announce that he has "kick't Conscience down stairs" and proceed with his plot. Young Fashion's action is also mitigated by the fact that he is under no obligation to Lord Foppington or Sir Tunbelly, while Loveless admits his strong obligation to Amanda. Thus Loveless' sin is more grievous.¹⁵ The fact that Lord Foppington, through his lack of charity, contributes to some extent to Young Fashion's cheat also relieves the latter of some of the responsibility. As unaware as Lord Foppington is of the needs of others, he cannot fail to be aware of Young Fashion's need after their conversation. Yet he rejects Young Fashion's request for a gift of 500 pounds, because his own circumstances are so reduced that he had to cut expenses on "Sweet Pawder." Lord Foppington's

refusal is even more reprehensible in view of the language employed by Young Fashion in his request. When he answers Lord Foppington's question whether it were reasonable to give away 500 pounds with the words, "I do not ask it as a due, Brother, I am willing to receive it as a Favour," Young Fashion expresses himself in terms faintly reminiscent of those associated with divine grace which can only be obtained gratuitously, not by merit. Lord Foppington's rejection of Young Fashion's request as unreasonable, not only condemns the former; it also condemns reason as the sole guide in human relationships: it may not be reasonable to give away 500 pounds, but charity would demand it.

While Young Fashion is certainly not sentimental, he is aware that sentiment plays a part in human relations, especially in the relations between the sexes. He sees women as more than instruments for physical pleasure, and acknowledges the fact that "a Woman has a Heart to dispose of." Notwithstanding this attitude, Young Fashion is ready to marry an heiress, sight unseen. This action, again, may to some extent be imputed to his desperate situation. Moreover, Hoyden's actions and comments are such that one may doubt whether she has a heart to dispose of. Her motives for marriage are comparable to those of Young Fashion: he wants a fortune and she wants the freedom marriage and life

in town will give her. Thus one can hardly call Young Fashion's marrying Hoyden under false pretenses a deceit as far as she is concerned: she would have married the baker. He does, however, deceive Sir Tunbelly, who does not get the son-in-law he desires, a "Peer of the Realm." But the very fact that all Sir Tunbelly requires of a son-in-law is a title may constitute a mitigating factor for Young Fashion. Moreover, if Sir Tunbelly regards marriage as nothing but a business arrangement, then it is up to him to protect his property. The whole transaction of Hoyden's marriage is in some way reminiscent of the transaction between Young Fashion and the Waterman. The difference is, however, that Young Fashion and the Waterman knew very well what each was doing, while Sir Tunbelly is caught unawares. But he tries to deceive the prospective buyer, by stressing Hoyden's "Vertuous Education," just as Young Fashion tried to fool the Waterman. Unlike the Waterman, Sir Tunbelly is taken in, if not by Young Fashion's protestations of love for Hoyden, then certainly by his pretensions to be Lord Foppington. Young Fashion, on the other hand, is not at all taken in by Sir Tunbelly's assertion of Hoyden's "Vertuous Education." Sir Tunbelly himself gives away his true estimate of Hoyden, when he frequently refers to her in terms of food, animals, and the hunt. He assures Young Fashion that Hoyden will "stay his Stomach," he predicts

that "she'll breed like a tame Rabbit," he justifies his refusal of allowing an immediate marriage by saying: "That's shooting my Girl before you bid her stand." Finally, after Young Fashion's deceit is discovered, Sir Tunbelly offers Hoyden to Lord Foppington with the words: "My Lord, here's my Girl, she is yours, she has a wholesome Body and Vertuous Mind; she is a Woman compleat, both in Flesh and in Spirit; she has a Bag of Mill'd Crowns, as scarce as they are, and fifteen hundred a year stich'd fast to her Tail" (p. 78). Partly Sir Tunbelly's language may be the result of his country life; the barnyard is closer to him than St. James Park. Yet his estimate of Hoyden's character tends to cast some doubt on her virtue, even though he does not seem to think so; he may well love her and consider her quite admirable. All the same it is difficult to see him as a "genial, simple, straightforward person," who, upon learning of Hoyden's marriage to Young Fashion, "cannot console himself with vain sophistry as Lord Foppington does . . . but tears out of the room!"¹⁶ In passing off Hoyden as a virtuous woman--a fact which her own statements deny--Sir Tunbelly practices deceit and consequently ought to be prepared to be deceived himself. This fact, of course, does not relieve Young Fashion from moral responsibility for his own actions, but it does make them more understandable.

Young Fashion is straightforward enough in his actions with other characters. There is no reason to assume

that he will cheat Coupler or Bull. He can easily convince Nurse that, although he had deceived her and Hoyden, "he" always design't to make a very good Husband to her, and a very good Friend to Nurse" (p. 78). Hoyden herself apparently prefers him to Lord Foppington as a husband, particularly if there is a chance to have him knighted. Thus the only ones really injured by Young Fashion are Lord Foppington and Sir Tunbilly. The first not only contributed to Young Fashion's deceit by refusing him even a "moderate aid," but also succeeds quite admirably to hide an "acking Heart," behind a "Philosophical Air." That leaves Sir Tunbilly, who, by reaching beyond his limitations in arranging a match for Hoyden, also brought on part of his failure himself. He was simply no match for Young Fashion's good sense and understanding.

Young Fashion proves the extent of his insight when, at the end of the play, he says to Hoyden:

Come Madam.
We once again you see are Man and Wife,
And now perhaps the Bargain's struck for
Life. (p. 100)

There is no indication of a happy ever after. Young Fashion looks at life realistically and realizes that the future is unpredictable.

Any prediction of a future with Hoyden would be particularly precarious because she lives almost exclusively by instinct. From her first appearance it is

gladly clear that Hoyden's "Virtue," such as it is, results from lack of opportunity rather than lack of inclination. Her own contrast of her confinement with the freedom of "the young Greyhound Bitch" not only implies Hoyden's estimate of herself, but also is one of the many instances in which she is referred to in terms of animals.

Even before her first appearance, Coupler calls her a "plump young Partridge," who is kept confined to her house completely "to prevent all Misfortunes." It seems reasonable to assume that the audience is expected to react to this description in somewhat the same way as Young Fashion does, who would "let the Devil take the Heiress . . . at least if she is as old Coupler describes her" (p. 57). Hoyden turns out very much as old Coupler described her. She might well have made good her threat to "marry the Baker," if a marriage had not been arranged for her, because, as she observes, she is "as Ripe" as Nurse. Her ripeness is purely physical and could be satisfied by the baker as well as by Young Fashion or Lord Foppington. Love does not even enter into her considerations. She is almost shocked at Nurse's warning that it is unwise to be too fond, and assures her that she "would not care if Young Fashion were hang't tomorrow, so she were but once married to him" (p. 61). She proves her statement to be true when, after the discovery of Young Fashion's cheat, she coolly decides to marry Lord Foppington and, after having married him, equally coolly changes

her mind again and declares that "she will be his wife no longer." Even though she does not like Lord Foppington's shape, she does not agree to acknowledge Young Fashion as her husband until Nurse convinces her that he might be made a knight and she also might be better off with him than with Lord Foppington as far as spending money is concerned.

Hoyden is basically no more than a healthy young animal whose purpose in life is the satisfaction of its appetites. Nurse's account of "how Hoyden used to hang at this poor Tett sic, and suck and squeeze, and kick and sprawl . . . till the Belly on't was so full, it would drop off like a Leech" (p. 63), draws attention to Hoyden's complete abandon to her appetites. She is still trying to satisfy her appetite, even though her appetites have changed in the process of growing up. Her pursuit of their satisfaction, however, has not changed. Everyone who knows her is aware of this fact: Nurse claims that Hoyden is "as full of good Nature as an Egg's of Meat." Sir Tunbelly's estimate of her character has already been discussed. Young Fashion, after one private conversation with her, reaches the conclusion that she may "prove a March Hare all the Year round," and make a "scampering Chace . . . on't when she finds the whole Kennel of Beaux at her Tail" (p. 63). Hoyden, obviously, is not the only one to notice the similarity between herself and the greyhound bitch,

to which she alludes again when she anticipates with pleasure how "these London Ladies will laugh 'till they crack again, to see her slip her Collar, and run away from her Husband" (p. 99).

Hoyden resembles "that husband," Lord Foppington, to the extent that the question of morals never even enters her mind anymore than it does his. But they differ insofar as he is all artificiality while she is all nature. But, since nature is fallen nature, Hoyden's naturalness does not render her an admirable character. She may have the appeal of a young healthy animal, but as a human being Hoyden is unsatisfactory. She and her father emphasize the fact implied by the play that nature and innocence are by no means synonymous.

The minor characters of the Young Fashion-Hoyden plot add greatly to its diversity. There are practically no minor characters in the Loveless-Amanda plot, a fact which suggests that the Young Fashion-Hoyden plot may present an application of the problems of the other plot to a wide variety of "common people." Nurse and Bull in a way represent a number of the sins which form the subject of both plots: they are motivated by greed and lust. Hoyden's statement that Nurse can be persuaded to do anything by the gift of a half crown and the assurance that she is "a wholesome comely woman" not only defines Nurse's character but

also implies that Bull is motivated by similar considerations. Moreover, Nurse's actions prove the truth of Hoyden's estimate. She takes Young Fashion's side in the debate for the possession of Hoyden because she does believe that she will fare better with him and, through his offices, acquire Bull for a husband and a "fat Living." In Bull's case, his sins are aggravated by the fact that he not only betrays his employer, Sir Tunbilly, by performing the marriage of Hoyden and Young Fashion, but also violates his office by allowing Hoyden to marry Lord Foppington, too. Collier most violently attacked Vanbrugh for presenting a priest as greedy and sinful, and considered this presentation an attack on religion. It is quite likely that Vanbrugh, even though he denies it in the Short Vindication, was taking a stab at the clergy. But, while this fact would not constitute an attack on religion, it would well support the theme of The Relapse. Priests are human and human Nature is subject to sin, owing to "the Frailty of Mankind." Neither social position, nor money, nor the cloth, nor philosophical considerations can exempt anyone from this frailty.

When Nurse reproaches Bull for his wickedness, her words seem to reiterate a number of the problems of The Relapse:

Roger, are not you a wicked Man, Roger, to set your Strength against a weak Woman, and persuade her it was no Sin to conceal Miss's Nuptials? My Conscience lyes in my Face for it, thou Priest of Baal; and I find by woeful experience, thy absolution is not worth an old cassock. Therefore I am resolv'd to confess the Truth to the whole World, tho' I die a Beggar for it. But his Worship overflows with his Mercy, and his Bounty: He is not only pleas'd to forgive us our sins, but designs thou sha't squat thee down in Fat-goose Living; and, which is more than all, has prevail'd with me to become the Wife of thy Bosom. (pp. 88-89)

Nurse's claim that she is resolved to tell the truth, even though it make her a beggar, is obviously untrue. But even so her statement introduces again the question of conscience versus desire. Moreover, Nurse's love of truth is rewarded instantly and tangibly, a fact which reminds one of the last scene of Love's Last Shift. Her statement and the attitude it implies is, however, undercut by the succeeding discourse of Bull and Coupler. Bull (who apparently wants the living, but not Nurse for a wife) is concerned that such an arrangement as she proposes might be regarded as simony. It is, he says, "a Point of Conscience: and Conscience is a tender Babe." Coupler's answer asserts that necessity, or even more, desire for wealth, takes precedence over conscience: "If it were Sacrildge, the Living's worth it" (p. 89).

This remark is in keeping with the character of Coupler, who has shown himself as totally lacking in illusion concerning human nature throughout the play. Coupler's

apparent homosexuality sets him to some extent apart from the other characters in The Relapse: some of the motivations for their actions do not exist for him. But precisely for this reason Coupler is in a position to judge the actions of the other characters so dispassionately and accurately. Therefore it is both ironic and fitting that he should preside at the trial which is to determine to whom Hoyden is legally married. The irony of the situation is that one like Coupler, who arranges marriage but whose inclinations exclude him from marriage, should pass judgment on a question involving marriage. On the other hand, since it is a question of law and not of sentiment that the trial is to decide, one of Coupler's business acumen and lack of involvement appears to be most suitable for the role of judge.

The whole scene of the trial, the final scene of the play taking place at "the Entertainment of Musick" at Lord Foppington's house, appears to be an inversion of the usual ending of comedy. "In the last scene [of comedy]," Northrop Frye states, ". . . the audience witnesses the birth of a renewed sense of social integration."¹⁷ The new order suggested by that social integration is represented by a marriage and a feast. There is a marriage and a feast at the end of The Relapse, but rather than confirm order--or create new order--it still leaves everything suspended.

The masque which takes place at the end of the

feast supports the view that little has been solved. In the masque Hymen and Cupid debate the question of marriage versus freedom. Cupid expresses the opinion that in view of the changeable human nature it would be wiser to dispense with marriage and to discharge "the volleys of Love on the Herd." In his answer, Hymen again stresses the point of view which has been consistently expressed throughout

The Relapse:

But I have not pretended, for many Years past,
By marrying of People, I make 'em grow chaste.
.....
For hast thou but Eyes, thou wouldst quickly
 perceive it,
How smoothly the Dart
Slips into the Heart
Of a Woman that's wed,
Whilst the shivering Maid
Stands trembling, and wishing, but dare not
 receive it.

(p. 97)

External conditions, Hyman suggests, do not fully account for man's actions. The first lines of his statement apparently refute (as The Relapse has done throuthout) Loveless' assumption at the end of Love's Last Shift that "the chaste Raptures of a vertuous Love" will last for ever and ever. Hyman's reference to Cupid's blindness not only points to the difficulty of seeing things properly, but also, ironically, shows the fallacy of making general statements: Amanda, the "Woman that's wed," resisted the dart; Hoyden, who never quite qualified for "the shivering Maid," may well follow Young Fashion's suggestions that "for her sake, kind Heaven always will preserve a Beau."

Thus the play that starts with the assertion that "our Heaven is seated in our Minds," implying control of one's destiny, ends on a note of "perhaps." It is possible to resist temptation; one can be conquered by virtue and resolve "to sin no more." But the danger of a relapse is always present, necessity exerts strong demands, self-love makes one blind, and how long any of these conditions may last, heaven only knows.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER III

¹Underwood, Etherege, p. 52. Professor Underwood makes this statement in discussing The Comical Revenge, but it seems applicable to The Relapse.

²The edition used throughout gives the stage direction: "a room in Loveless' Country House" in brackets. This stage direction, however, is an addition of Leigh Hunt in his edition of 1850 (cf. Mermaid edition of Sir John Vanbrugh, A. E. H. Swain, ed., London, 1949). The edition of 1776 contains only the stage direction "enter Loveless reading." Thus there is no indication that Act I, i took place in a room in Loveless' country house. I believe that the scene ought to be laid in a garden, not only in order to underscore the paradisiacal qualities of the setting, but also to let the audience know from the first that Loveless and Amanda have withdrawn to the country. There is nothing in the words to indicate that fact until the second part of the scene.

³Moral Philosophie, p. 74.

⁴St. Augustine, claiming that every sin is a lie insofar as in sinning man forsakes God, who is truth, states: "We never sin except with a desire to do ourselves good, or not to do ourselves hurt" (City of God, XIV, iv (Everyman Edition, vol. II, p. 30)). St. Thomas Aquinas defines sin as "the desire for some mutable good for which man has an inordinate desire, and the possession of which gives him inordinate pleasure" (Summa Theologica, Q 72, Art. II). Du Vair similarly states that "the generall intention, whereby wee are directed and guided, is to come into that which is good . . . /yet/ wee, because wee doe not knowe wherein consisteth our good, but oftentimes take that which is about it, for it; do therefore in our particular actions take our ayme amisse, and shoot wide from our generall marke and intention" (Moral Philosophie, p. 54).

⁵Paradise Lost, IX, 1053-54.

⁶The OED quotes "to look through the wrong end of the perspective" under "Perspective" I 2, and defines it as "to look upon something as smaller or of less consequence than it is. Obs."

⁷Ibid., III, 7.

⁸Ibid., II 4 b.

⁹The most frequently occurring key words are: Heaven, love, nature, conscience, fool(s), virtue, charms, eye(s).

¹⁰Underwood, Etherege, p. 52. See note 1, above.

¹¹Perry, Comic Spirit, p. 85; Palmer, Comedy of Manners, p. 224; Hazlitt, Works, 7, p. 179.

¹²Perry, Comic Spirit, p. 85.

¹³See Chapter I, pp. 29, 37, and 38.

¹⁴See Chapter I, pp. 27, 36.

¹⁵Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Q LXXIII, Art. 9.

¹⁶Comic Spirit, p. 91.

¹⁷"The Argument of Comedy," English Institute Essays 1948 (New York, 1949), pp. 60-61.

CONCLUSION

A careful reading of The Relapse, combined with a study of its occasion and background, appears to justify the conclusion that--contrary to frequently voiced critical opinion--Vanbrugh did more than write a bawdy play for the diversion of the gentlemen of the town. That The Relapse is bawdy cannot be denied, nor ought a sympathetic critic attempt to do so. The play abounds in double entendres which add greatly to its entertainment. Yet the bawdiness and the double entendres serve a purpose beyond that of endearing the author to the audience. When Cibber defends his presentation of virtue in a play, he excuses himself in the epilogue by claiming that the author "is lewd for above four acts, gentlemen." This apology implies that the "lewdness" does not advance the play but is put into it solely for the gratification of the audience's taste.

In The Relapse, on the other hand, the double entendres, together with other verbal devices, such as allusion, irony, and inversion, serve to demonstrate the contrast between man's aspirations and his achievements, the ideal and the real. Loveless' fall is comic (despite serious overtones) precisely because he--unlike his creator--fails to take into account "the Frailty of Mankind." Worthy's

conversion, too, is comic rather than sentimental, even though for the opposite reason; he takes into account nothing but "the Frailty of Mankind." Both Loveless and Worthy act in a way which contradicts their repeatedly stated opinion of themselves and human nature in general. Had Vanbrugh populated his play exclusively with characters of Loveless' kind, he would have presented a cynical view of life. Had he, on the other hand, allowed all of his characters to come to a realization of the "right way," and to follow it, he would have presented the sentimental view. As it is, Vanbrugh shows that people more often than not fall far short of the ideal, without, however, denying the possibility that--at least occasionally and temporarily--they may rise to a state approaching the ideal. Thus he presents a view of life in accord with that of orthodox Christianity.

The mere fact that The Relapse offers a consistent view of life contradicts the claim that its author "had no peculiar vision," while the way in which Vanbrugh presents his view absolves him from the charge that he lacked artistry and "put down naturally what occurred to him easily."¹ If the action of The Relapse appears chaotic to the casual reader, the fault may be his, rather than the play's. The action of the play is carefully ordered to follow the pattern of the fall--the progression of sin from temptation to sinful action. The two plots are unified insofar as

both of them evolve around the same problem albeit under different circumstances. Moreover, Vanbrugh handles language with great dexterity: his shifting of similar lines from character to character emphasizes differences in point of view and moral attitudes between characters on one hand, while also indicating likeness between apparently dissimilar characters on the other. This technique not only provides occasion for laughter but also reveals the failure of man to recognize himself and his limitations.

These limitations apparently exclude the possibility of a "happy ever after" as it is presented in Love's Last Shift. They do, however, allow for the possibility of the denial of one's desires, at least for the moment. Choosing the right way once only forces one to choose it again and again--and whether one will always choose the same way heaven only knows.

¹Perry, Comic Spirit, p. 102.

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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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